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Planter and Cotton Factor in the Old South: Some Areas of Friction	<i>Ralph W. Haskins</i>	1
Henry Ford and the Agricultural Depression of 1920-1923	<i>Reynold M. Wik</i>	15
Diplomats and Plant Collectors: The South American Commission 1817-1818	<i>Wayne D. Rasmussen</i>	22
The Agriculture of Oxfordshire at the End of the Eighteenth Century	<i>Audrey M. Lambert</i>	31
Records of the First Century of Interest of the United States Government in Plant Industries	<i>Harold T. Pinkett</i>	38
Book Reviews		46
News Notes and Comments		48

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PLANTER AND COTTON FACTOR IN THE OLD SOUTH: SOME AREAS OF FRICTION

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Amid the financial chaos of the late Jacksonian period, a Mobile cotton factor wrote reflectively: "Commerce must regulate it[s] Self . . . the Planter Should Carefully and Closely attend to his Interest: and the merchant do the Same. thereby a ballancing power would be exerted—and both parties will be equally bennifitted."¹ The proposition was sound in theory but difficult in practice. For the factor had touched upon one of the fundamental problems of American economy—how to reconcile the interests of producer and middleman. Historically, this relationship has been marked by strife in varying degree, and the Old South was no exception. That the grievances were not all on one side is equally apparent. This study is not concerned with efforts to solve the mutual problems of factor and planter; rather, it is an analysis of some of the outstanding differences, partly as contemporaries saw them and partly as they appear in the light of research. Dissension did not outweigh harmony, for the latter was the rule and the former the exception. However, this paper is concerned with the points at which friction did occur.

To say that the cotton factorage system exerted a profound influence on the ante-bellum South does not necessarily identify one with the "moonlight and magnolia" school.² If the factor had comparatively few ties with thousands of rural southerners in the smaller income group, he played a prominent role in urban life; and, above all, his was a key position in the plantation system. The commercial practices known collectively as factorage were the products of a slow evolutionary

growth which dated back to the work of joint-stock companies, continued through the colonial period, and were characteristic of ante-bellum times.³

Marketing the cotton crop was probably the most important of the factor's varied services. As agent for the planter or interior merchant, he watched the fluctuations of the market, offered timely advice in this connection, and gauged the most favorable opportunity for disposal. His responsibility did not end with the sale; accountable to the shipper for the proceeds, he was indirectly liable to the consumer for the quality of the cotton. Scarcely less significant was the factor's role as supply agent for the plantation. To a certain extent, he took the place of the retail merchant as a provider of goods for the planter, although he did not dominate this field. His buying function

¹ The usages of that day render it very difficult to distinguish between "factors" and "commission merchants." In theory, there was a differentiation of function: the former was an agent employed to market produce for a principal, in this case the planter; the commission merchant secured supplies of various kinds for his customers. One circular announced Duke Goodman's location in Mobile, "as a seller of Cotton and other produce of the country, better known as a (factor) —Also of purchasing the Planters' supplies, and of receiving and forwarding country Merchants' and Planter's goods, and executing all orders from Merchants and Planters." Goodman Circular, Mobile, June 7, 1832, Singleton Papers. Goodman was thus identifiable as factor, as commission and forwarding merchant, and even as general merchant. In each of these capacities, a compensation, or commission, was usually forthcoming. In practice the "factor" and "commission merchant" were practically synonymous and the two functions shaded off into each other. Though directories issued after 1800 by southern cities indicate an increasing specialization, the factor often continued to perform a variety of services characteristic of a general merchant. Southern laws and southern courts seem to have made no distinction; indeed, the terms were used interchangeably and indiscriminately.

¹ Duke Goodman to Richard Singleton, Mobile, September 4, 1841, Singleton Papers, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill.

² Cf. John K. Bettersworth's review of Lewis E. Atherton's *The Southern Country Store, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge, 1949), *Journal of Southern History*, 16: 84-86 (February, 1950). Though the influence of the factorage system has probably been overemphasized, a really critical judgment would seem to await a detailed study of factorage.

was twofold: in addition to his capacity as supply agent, the factor sometimes purchased cotton either independently or for others. Not only did he supply the plantation, but he shouldered much of the burden of financing this enterprise. He held the planter's funds subject to order, extended credit through a system of advances, procured bills of exchange, discounted notes, and remitted specie. Finally, contemporary records show conclusively that he was not only a banker but a personal agent as well—investment counsel, stockbroker, collector, real estate operator, and jack-of-all-trades. In short, he rendered a multitude of services so diverse in nature that he was a veritable "planter's factotum."

Though the community of interest between planter and factor centered around the plantation, the cotton crop, and the system of advances, it was further promoted by common origins, by blood ties, by an overlapping of professions, and by reciprocal services of various kinds. In the main, the relationship was a cordial one. "I cannot close this Communication without expressing my *entire satisfaction* with you, as my Cotton Factors,"⁴ wrote a Tennessee planter. A Charleston factor in desperate straits expressed with picturesque language his gratitude "for your unsought for Act of profound friendship in Risking my Character . . . from an Unfeeling and unprincipled Wretch, for the Paltry Sum of Twenty three dollars—woud of damd me for ever."⁵ Granted that much sentiment was strictly commercial—in the interests of bigger and better business—plantation and mercantile records nevertheless contain many expressions of friendship and confidence. Perhaps the ante-bellum planter and factor came as near to achieving harmony as did any combination of merchant and agrarian. But neither in individual cases nor in the wider sphere of group interests were the relations of factor and planter entirely free from discord. Producer and middleman wrangled over the manifold problems connected with marketing, purchasing, banking, and general agency.

Since selling the crop was the factor's most important function, it was but natural that friction should be greatest in the field of marketing—as

regards forecasting, quality of cotton, transportation, the selling process itself, and in the various assessments levied by the factor.

Even before the crop was on its way to market, many planters came to question the accuracy of crop forecasts and cotton statistics issued periodically by factors. There were obvious defects. Communication prior to the telegraph was slow, a fact amply illustrated by the exchange of market reports. For instance, Liverpool accounts of May 25, 1825, reached a Petersburg house 39 days later. On May 3 of the following year, the same firm had quotations issued 41 days before.⁶ A more pointed though unproven accusation was voiced in 1852 during the course of a movement by cotton planters to obtain more accurate statistics on the growing crop. Spokesmen for this project attributed much of the sudden price fluctuations to the tardiness with which the amount of the American crop was ascertained. "It is in the power of all parties interested," they added, "to magnify or diminish the estimate as best suits their interest for purchasing from the planter, or selling any stocks they may have on hand."⁷

More specific were disputes over the quality of cotton itself. Much of this controversy centered around "false-packing," which took several forms and was sometimes accidental but often deliberate. One method involved the use of thin strips of prime cotton on the two sides of the bale usually sampled. The inside was composed wholly of inferior material. At other times, there were layers of various grades, each of poorer quality as one penetrated toward the center.⁸ A widely-used technique consisted of labeling inferior varieties as "prime" or some other high grade: low-quality Alabama, billed as Mississippi or Louisiana cotton, was sold on the New Orleans market.⁹ Less ingenious shippers placed stones, dirt, trash, or water inside the bale to increase the weight. Georgia petitioners, addressing the legislature in 1823, observed with rare insight that the poor showing of

⁶ Robert Hamilton & Company to Duncan Cameron, Petersburg, July 2, 1825, and May 3, 1826, Cameron Papers, University of North Carolina Library.

⁷ *DeBow's Review*, 13: 294 (September, 1852).

⁸ James E. Boyle, *Cotton and the New Orleans Cotton Exchange: A Century of Commercial Evolution* (Garden City, New York, 1934), 53-54.

⁹ *Mobile Commercial Register*, May 18, 1824, cited in Charles Davis, *The Cotton Kingdom in Alabama* (Montgomery, 1939), 144.

⁴ Wm. F. Reed to Heard & Simpson, Memphis, April 26, 1859, Heard Papers, University of North Carolina Library.

⁵ Goodman to Richard Singleton, Charleston, November 24, 1825, Singleton Papers.

the state's cotton could be attributed to the presence of rocks within the bales.¹⁰

It was sometimes difficult to fix the responsibility for false-packing within the plantation force. Some planters were not overly scrupulous, but a share of the blame lay with others. When overseers or slaves received a percentage from the sale, they were occasionally tempted to "load" the cotton.¹¹

Factors, either to enhance their profits or to protect their reputations as dealers in high-grade cotton, occasionally resorted to substituting one quality for another. According to the Liverpool American Chamber of Commerce, a large proportion of shipments arriving in Liverpool in the 'fifties contained falsely or irregularly-packed bundles, and now and then whole parcels of 20, 50, or even 100 bales were mixed or "plated."¹² "Round," or repacked bales, drew additional criticism.¹³ A curious letter from an upstate Georgia firm to an Augusta commission house sheds further light on usages in the trade: "you must crowd our lots with others that are better, in selling, and make Gus weigh our Cotton, so as to gain, or in other words, not let him take off so much for wet."¹⁴

Not all such cases could be attributed to dishonesty—a number were due to carelessness in picking, ginning, and packing, to exposure to damp weather, or to damage en route. Under these circumstances, the term "false" or "irregular" pack-

ing might also mean less merchantable cotton. Many planters did not closely supervise the raising of their crop and its preparation for market; with essentially unskilled labor involved, it was not surprising that a bale might contain several grades.¹⁵ Not uncommonly the product defied classification. "The fact is—it was not exactly cotton—nor trash—But a conglomeration of moats—& frostbitten Stuff resembling—rats nests—made of nankeen."¹⁶ Extensive damage resulted from exposure to the weather prior to arrival at market. The correspondence of Mrs. James K. Polk with her New Orleans factors affords a graphic picture of losses from carelessness, mishaps in transit, and destruction by fire.¹⁷ The Indiana farmer Solon Robinson, visiting the South in 1850, declared that the handling of cotton was "one continued waste" all along the line from producer to consumer. Landing and exposure to the elements, the method of sampling, and other practices contributed to reduce the quality.¹⁸ Robinson may have exaggerated, but southerners were slow to adopt habits of economy in production and marketing.

¹⁰ Charles G. Cordle, "Henry Shultz and the Founding of Hamburg, South Carolina," James C. Bonner and Lucien E. Roberts, eds., *Studies in Georgia History and Government* (Athens, Ga., 1940), 88–89.

¹¹ James Harvey Merritt to John Singleton, Charleston, April 29, 1820, Singleton Papers; see also Savannah *Daily Morning News*, February 28, 1860.

¹² *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, 36: 352 (March, 1857). For other instances of alleged substitution by factors, see *Pattison v. Moore*, Porter, *Alabama Reports*, 3: 270–278 (1836) and *Austill & Marshall v. Crawford*, *Alabama Reports*, 7: 335–343 (1845).

¹³ "Round" bales, in this context, meant cotton repacked at market, with the inference that inferior grades were mixed at random. Prior to the development and widespread use of superior methods of compression, "round" represented a regular classification. Planters of sea-island cotton did not generally pack their cotton in "square" bales; instead, they preferred it packed in bags. Lewis C. Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860* (2 vols., Washington, 1933), 2: 736.

¹⁴ Benson & Rosamond to Heard & Simpson, West Point, Georgia, November 22, 1858, Heard Papers.

¹⁵ Franklin Robinson to Samuel Pickens, Mobile, April, 18, 1831, Samuel Pickens Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery; Byrne, Vance & Company to James Sheppard, New Orleans, February [28], 1857, James Sheppard Papers, Duke University Library, Durham, North Carolina; Richard Nugent & Company to C. D. Hamilton, New Orleans, September 21, 1859, C. D. Hamilton Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson. Depositions in a South Carolina court case illustrate the way in which false-packing might be accidental. In eight bales of sea-island cotton, the product was found to be mixed with hair one or two inches in length, in the proportion of a pound or a handful to each bale, or of one or two hundred hairs to each handful of cotton. Untanned hides had been used as bands for the machine in which the cotton was ginned. *Carnochan v. Gould*, Bailey, *South Carolina Law Reports*, 1: 179–181 (1829).

¹⁶ N. Scudder to St. John R. Liddell, New Orleans, April 23, 1856, Liddell (Moses, St. John R., and family) Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge.

¹⁷ These letters are scattered through the Polk Papers (Mrs. Polk), Library of Congress; some of them were printed in John Spencer Bassett, *The Southern Plantation Overseer as Revealed in His Letters* (Northampton, Mass., 1925), *passim*.

¹⁸ *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, 22: 350–351 (February, 1850).

Losses in weight—the difference between plantation and market figures—elicited much controversy. In the 'forties, an Alabama planter shipped to a New Orleans house 51 bales which she claimed amounted to approximately 24,500 pounds, and received a sales account which credited her with nearly 4000 pounds less. "Common courtesy tells us to treat your communication . . . with respect, yet the writer of the same deserves no consideration from us," remarked the factors in rejecting a demand for remuneration; "and [we] are somewhat surprised that after transacting the business of your husband & self for so many years . . . the writer should insinuate that we had willingly wronged you out of a cent."¹⁹ In a somewhat similar way, evidence cited in a Georgia court case of 1859 showed a difference of some 6000 pounds between the shipping-point and Liverpool.²⁰ To assess responsibility for these discrepancies is difficult, if not impossible. In a sense, it is beside the point. No matter whether the fault lay with the planter and his force, the carrier, the factor, the weigher, other intermediaries, or even the elements, it often occasioned bitter dispute, in a cycle which ran the gamut from agency to agency, from destination back to origin.

Moreover, there were numerous quarrels over sales. Aside from the unpredictability of the market, inadequate returns could be traced to various influences operating singly or in combination: ill-luck, poor handling, and the violation of contract or instructions. One such experience might well render the producer wary. It is not difficult to imagine a Louisiana planter's reaction when, after he complained of a meager return, his factor explained the loss as an unwise tactical move. "The lot . . . was unfortunately sold two days too soon. . . . I requested my partner not to offer . . . until The following monday. . . . instead of waiting . . . he Sold on Saturday, Thereby not participating at all in The mark[ed] improvement in prices, which Commenced on the following monday."²¹ Breaches of contract brought ready

complaint. Written or verbal contracts were not a fixed custom, but the planter generally gave directions for the disposal of his crop.²² In the spring of 1847 a South Carolina grower and his Charleston merchant agreed that the latter was to sell upon receipt of written instructions. These were given in July; nevertheless, the factor dallied for several months and finally obtained the year's lowest price. "I regret that truth and candour compels me to say," wrote the irate planter, "neither your management of this part of my business, nor apology for its mismanagement is by any means satisfactory."²³ Parties to verbal contracts or "understandings" found to their sorrow that these agreements were susceptible to varying interpretation.

Still other disagreements stemmed from the terms of sale, particularly when the extension of credit to the purchaser was followed by difficulty in securing payment for the cotton. That this widespread practice led to considerable abuse is suggested by the comment of a Louisiana jurist in 1825. In New Orleans, said John Slidell, it was quite too common to repose confidence in the buyer—confidence to such a degree that the latter obtained control of the merchandise before the price was paid. Speculators, without real means but enjoying an undeserved credit, thus made large-scale operations in the market. Such laxity was a prolific source of fraud and litigation.²⁴ Perhaps the fact that they received comparatively small consignments from individual planters but often sold in wholesale lots to buyers may have influenced some factors to overextend themselves in dispensing credit to consumers' representatives.

Incidental costs of marketing contributed further to the differences between planter and factor. The situation was scarcely overstated by the southern correspondent of a New York newspaper: "The steamer charges a dollar a bale. The sampler, weigher, drayman, piccory, warehouse and pressmen and brokers, all have a snug per cent. The factor has on an average a dollar a bale for selling . . . and all that comes out of your pocket and

¹⁹ Mary Coffee to Maunsel White & Company, Florence [Alabama], April 13, 1851, and Maunsel White & Company to Mrs. Coffee, New Orleans, April 23, 1841, John Coffee Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History.

²⁰ *Cloud & Shackelford v. Hartridge & Hartridge, Adm'rs.*, *Georgia Reports*, 28: 272-276 (1859).

²¹ M. Gillis to St. John R. Liddell, New Orleans, November 1, 1860, Liddell Papers.

²² While this was true in the main, it varied with individual cases.

²³ E. K. Anderson to William Law, Charleston, December 6, 1847, and Law to Anderson, Darlington [South Carolina], December [n. d.], 1847, William Law Papers, Duke University Library.

²⁴ *Campbell & Richarby v. Penn*, *Louisiana Annual Reports*, 7: 376 (1852).

mine, and all but the great unshirtd." ²⁵ Far from acquiescing in these levies, growers frequently and emphatically registered their disapproval of assessments for drayage, storage, labor, insurance, compression, and sales commissions. There were probably few planters of the Old South who did not at one time or another complain of such exactions.

The significance here does not lie in charges alone; more subtle were the growth of custom and the inertia of routine, through which certain practices gained such wide acceptance that they are almost totally disregarded in contemporary records. One example was the "average account." In 1845, Austill & Marshall of Mobile sold an upstate planter's crop as part of a larger lot, which averaged 13 cents per pound. But the factors paid the planter only 12 cents, the relative value of his cotton. Austill & Marshall maintained that this procedure was according to "usages of trade," but their appeal was denied by the Alabama Supreme Court. ²⁶ A similar case arose from a charge of 45 cents per bale for drayage, storage, labor, weighing, and insurance. Here again the factors invoked the "sanction of custom," but nothing in their testimony indicated how they had reached the precise calculation of 45 cents. On the other hand, there was no information as to the proportionate value of money or scrip to which the planter's insurance policy entitled him. ²⁷

In the same category were tendencies to maintain fees at unnecessarily high levels or to charge for services that had not been rendered. Though they continued in the 'fifties to assess planters for drayage, storage, and labor at the old rate of four dollars, certain New Orleans factors obtained the same accommodation for one dollar through contracts with local cotton presses. The savings represented were not being passed on to the producer. One innovator proposed to cut these costs by one-third: "as it [one dollar] is all I pay, therefore, it is all I have a right to charge. Whilst Most of the larger houses here actually pay less than this—and Still retain the old charge of 4/. But upon

what ground I am unable to learn." ²⁸ A South Carolina planter, examining some sales accounts, discovered that he had been billed twice for insurance he had not required. ²⁹ Considering the fact that many planters were careless in their book-keeping, it is a moot question whether such charges appeared by accident or by design.

As supply agent for the planter, the factor furnished the necessities for day to day existence on the plantation, as well as the luxuries. Less often he obtained slaves. Upon numerous occasions he lent credit through the acceptance of drafts or settled the planter's bills rendered by others. Finally, as the planter's personal agent, the factor received and forwarded goods to their destination. The problems connected with plantation supply provided an additional source of friction.

High prices drew their share of criticism. In December 1834, an Alabama planter complained of an excessive charge for supplies. This was denied by his Mobile factor who demanded a retraction in order to protect his standing. ³⁰ Controversy often resulted from the leeway allowed the factor in the selection of goods. In filling a Carolinian's order for three sacks of ground salt, a Petersburg house bought from another firm at \$2.75, instead of drawing from stock at \$2.50. Though the factors explained that superior quality and quantity really made the salt cheaper than their own, the substitution was not acceptable, and the 25 cents in question was refunded. ³¹

A notable trend in the period from 1800 to 1860 was the shift from cash to credit sales. Planters who were "under advance" from their factors often found this accommodation a mixed blessing which brought with it the inconvenience of credit prices. For example, a New Orleans factor's "bill of sundries" furnished to a Mississippi planter under date of May 24, 1828, carried the additional statement "Due in cash on 24th Sept. next. after which I shall charge you at the rate of 10 PCent Interest until this amount is paid." ³² A later writer observed that debtors were being forced to pay 20

²⁵ "Cotton Factors and Commission Merchants," *The Soil of the South*, 3: 677 (October, 1853).

²⁶ *Austill & Marshal v. Crawford, Alabama Reports*, 7: 335-342 (1845). This case suggests a further query: suppose the relative value of the planter's cotton had been fourteen cents? Would the factors have relied on relative value or average price?

²⁷ *Brander, Williams & Company v. Lum, Louisiana Annual Reports*, 11: 217-219 (1856).

²⁸ N. Scudder to St. John R. Liddell, New Orleans, November 10, 1855, Liddell Papers.

²⁹ *Huguenin v. Legare & Colcock, Richardson, South Carolina Law Reports*, 11: 204-216 (1858).

³⁰ Davis, *Cotton Kingdom*, 148.

³¹ A. & P. Hamilton & Kevan to Duncan Cameron, Petersburg, August 1, 1829, Cameron Papers.

³² Maunsel White & Company Invoice, New Orleans, May 24, 1858, Zachariah Walker Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

cents per pound for bacon, when the cash price was but 12. With the average credit about four months, interest thus accumulated at the rate of nearly 200 per cent per annum.³³

The most significant feature of commissions and other expenses was the factor's adherence to accepted standards. Southern chambers of commerce regulated such fees in the major ports. Yet there were violations of these "tariffs of charges." Some factors charged more than 2½ per cent for purchasing; some assessed commissions at times and at other times omitted them; and a number required no commissions at all. The journal of a Savannah house shows that not only did it invariably levy this fee but in their case, it was seldom less than three per cent.³⁴ Such proceedings suggest that, depending upon the circumstances, it might at times have been a matter of how far one could go. Whereas factors as a group spoke piously of "tariffs of charges" and "usages of trade," some individual merchants had little hesitation in departing from the "norm." "Custom," or general mercantile practice, might occasionally mean nothing more than the policy of a particular firm.

Factors also bought cotton on a limited scale, either for others or on their own account. This procedure seems to have been customary at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the factor was more apt to be a jack-of-all-trades than a specialist, and often purchased the planter's entire crop for resale or consignment elsewhere.³⁵ As the cotton traffic grew increasingly intricate, contemporary opinion became more and more opposed to a factor or commission merchant acting as both buyer and seller of cotton. In this business, where

a respectable fortune could conceivably be made by a few timely or lucky maneuvers, factors must have found it hard to withstand the temptation to plunge. Probably most factors were conservative in this respect, and with good reason: not only were they concerned with their standing in the mercantile community, but news of speculation and other untoward practices eventually reached their customers. Some planters were not above speculation, but they did not condone such tactics in their agents. Nevertheless, some cotton transactions were purely for speculative ends. According to testimony in a South Carolina court case of the 'twenties, factors of every description often sold for themselves, and "selling rice and cotton it is often that they are the planters, and may be speculators in the produce too."³⁶ A contributor to *Farmer and Planter* sounded a warning in 1858:

As it is strongly suspected that many cotton factors are also cotton *Speculators*, having interests directly opposed to the interests of the planters and interior shippers, it behoves the latter to scan with a suspicious eye, the singular and improbable statements and estimates of the supply of cotton, put forth by the former.³⁷

When a Charleston merchant declared that no factor could sell and at the same time buy cotton because the two functions militated against each other, he was merely voicing the opinion of the majority of producers.³⁸

Despite the essential nature of the factor's services as banker and personal agent for the planter, these services frequently caused much bickering. Though dishonesty was occasional on both sides, there were more fundamental differences. With the planter it was the "vicious cycle" of indebtedness, and the burden of interest and other charges; with the factor it was the liquidation of old ac-

³³ D. A. Tompkins, "Money in Cotton Growing," *Southern States*, [n. v., n. p.] (July, 1897), cited in Norman Sidney Buck, *The Development of the Organisation of Anglo-American Trade 1800-1850* (New Haven, 1925), 70.

³⁴ Tison & Gordon Journal, July and September, 1856, 1857, and 1859, Gordon & Company Papers, Baker Library, Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration, Boston.

³⁵ Almy & Brown to Wheeler & Warren, Providence, May 5 [n. d.], to Adams & Lathrop, Providence, February 28, 1803, and to Ogie & Maxwell, Providence, November 16, 1804, Almy & Brown Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence; Hary Grant to Pierce Butler, Charleston, March 31, 1796, Pierce Butler Papers, Southern Estates, Pennsylvania Historical Society, Philadelphia.

³⁶ *Davenport v. Riley*, McCord, *South Carolina Law Reports*, 2: 200 (1822).

³⁷ Quoted in Gray, *Agriculture in the Southern United States*, 2: 711.

³⁸ Frederic W. Sollee to Richard Singleton, Charleston, December 4, 1824, Singleton Papers. An outstanding exception was James Adger of Charleston, apparently both factor and cotton buyer, as well as agent for Brown Brothers & Company. See H. W. Conner & Co. v. Robinson, Hill, *South Carolina Law Reports*, 2: 360 (1834), and John Crosby Brown, *A Hundred Years of Merchant Banking: A History of Brown Brothers & Company, Brown, Shipley & Company, and the Allied Firms* (New York, 1909), 256, 262-264.

counts, the misappropriation of loans, and the loss from overadvances.

The character of the cotton trade and the methods of transaction lent themselves to chicanery. The factorage business, with its relatively small initial capital investment, its constantly fluctuating personnel, its keen competition, and its expansion to inland trade areas, gave ample opportunity for unscrupulous individuals. Cotton planters and cotton factors were not always a select group.³⁹ At times, too, policies followed by some factors demonstrated that there was a very thin line between honesty, expediency, and bad faith.⁴⁰ Not a few producers would have accepted at face value the pointed jocularity of a Louisianan newly embarked in the factorage and commission business—"depend on it we are Smart fellows—& very honest—for Merchants."⁴¹

Nor were planters above reproach. A Charleston concern, furnishing a client with 800 dollars for a trip to the springs, was astonished to find him apparently requesting a duplicate advance. It developed that the forgery had been attempted by a man who had once before swindled the factors.⁴² And a Kentuckian, posing as a wealthy planter with a large cotton crop to market, utilized a forged letter from a New Orleans factorage house to mulct Brown Brothers & Company out of a considerable sum.⁴³

The system of advances, which had prevailed

³⁹ One New Orleans factor was described privately as "a great scoundrel," who rendered false accounting of cotton proceeds. Journal of Thomas F. Pleasants, New Orleans, June 25, 1815, Pennsylvania Historical Society.

⁴⁰ For example, a partner in a Charleston firm was accused of undervaluing a debtor's property and thus favoring the latter's brother over several planter creditors. See William Law to Robinson & Caldwell, Darlington, November 23, 1841, and Deposition of Creditors of James Law, Sumter District, South Carolina, January [n. d.], 1842, William Law Papers.

⁴¹ James Sterrett to Nathaniel Evans, New Orleans, December 5, 1805, Evans (J. N. and family) Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University.

⁴² A. H. Boykin to Robinson & Caldwell, Warm Springs [Georgia], August 2, 1837, and Robinson & Caldwell to Boykin, Charleston, August 2 and October 9, 1837, Boykin Papers, Duke University Library.

⁴³ Beginning with the letter from "H. S. Hill" to Maunsel White, the correspondence in regard to this episode is quoted at some length in Brown, *A Hundred Years of Merchant Banking*, 206-207, and note 1, *passim*.

since colonial times, was a major source of controversy. Long before the Revolution, southern planters had fallen into chronic indebtedness, and the habit continued with the rise of the Cotton Kingdom. "A disposition to contract debts is one of the vices of the Carolinians," declared an early nineteenth century historian. "When crops are anticipated by engagements founded on them before they are made, ruin is often the consequence, and much oftener since the Revolution than before."⁴⁴ A half-century later, it was charged that factors were advancing money as required during the summer, thus carrying over engagements into the cotton season—an arrangement beneficial to one side only, according to the writer, since it placed planters under obligation to continue their business in the hands of the factors.⁴⁵

From the planter's standpoint, one particularly objectionable feature of the system was its tendency to give the factor a measure of control over the cotton crop. Despite all that has been written about southern credit based on word of honor and little else, the factor was a business man; and sound business dictated that a liberal credit policy rest on security wherever possible. Many factors were loath to extend loans on the casual basis of a conversation, an "understanding," or even a letter, and imposed conditions of all kinds. Some expected to receive a planter's crop in time to meet his drafts at maturity; others premised the acceptance of any drafts upon the receipt of the crop or the producer's valuation of the cotton to be shipped. A few declined such services during the inactive season of the year.⁴⁶ Some refused to advance unless they were allowed to sell at their own discretion; others expected the proceeds of the sale to cover the advance; and a smaller number withheld any accommodations unless the whole crop were shipped to them.⁴⁷ By the latter

⁴⁴ David Ramsay, *The History of South Carolina, from its first Settlement in 1670, to the Year 1808* (2 vols., Charleston, 1809), 2: 222, 224.

⁴⁵ *DeBow's Review*, 25: 714 (December, 1858).

⁴⁶ Flower & Faulkner to John M. Pintard, New Orleans, August 26, 1809, Pintard Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University.

⁴⁷ For examples of such qualifications, see *Hancock v. Tanner & Egans*, Stewart & Porter, *Alabama Reports*, 4: 264 (1833); *Powell v. Aiken & Gwinn*, et al, *Louisiana Reports*, 18: 330 (1841); E. L. Andrew & Company to Samuel Pickens, Mobile, October 26, 1841, Samuel Pickens Papers; M. P. Holloway & Company to James

restriction, a sample lot of 100 bales went in its entirety to the factor, although the debt may have been equivalent in value to only 50 bales. A Florida planter's mortgage reads: "I promise and agree to ship and consign at my own risk . . . the whole of my said cotton crop that I grow during the said year."⁴⁸ Historians have long stressed the heavy burden imposed by the penalty commission, which bound the planter to cultivate so many acres of cotton, and to forfeit a certain sum per bale for each bale by which the crop fell short of the stipulated amount. It is likely, however, that this practice was more prevalent after 1865. If the penalty commission had been employed on an extensive scale, one might expect it to be the subject of litigation in southern supreme courts, as were most of the difficulties between planter and factor.⁴⁹

Equally controversial were the "customary" fees—charges for interest and commissions for advancing, negotiating, and carrying over unpaid accounts. It is not enough to say that commissions were fixed by law or standardized by locale at from two and one half to five per cent. An observer noted with a considerable degree of truth that "he lends the planter money, on which he gets interest you may be sure; sometimes what the law 'allows', and sometimes 'what money will bring.'"⁵⁰ Factors often circumvented legal restriction by written contracts which authorized excessive interest rates and commissions.⁵¹ At times these

Sheppard, Grand Gulf [Mississippi], November 16, 1846, James Sheppard Papers.

⁴⁸ Kathryn Abbey, ed., "Documents relating to El Destino and Chemonie Plantations, Middle Florida, 1826-1868," *Florida Historical Society Quarterly*, 7: 192 (January and April, 1929).

⁴⁹ Cf. Clement Eaton, *The Old South* (New York, 1949), 399, citing A. H. Stone, "The Cotton Factorage System of the Southern States," *American Historical Review*, 20: 557-565 (April, 1915), and Weymouth T. Jordan, *Hugh Davis and His Alabama Plantation* (University, Ala., 1948), Chs. 6-7. But Stone was discussing the system as it existed in both the Old and the New South and did not say definitely that the penalty commission was employed in the former; nor did Jordan refer specifically to the practice. There appears to be little information on this particular subject, either in plantation records or in state supreme court decisions.

⁵⁰ "Cotton Factors and Commission Merchants," 677.

⁵¹ *Barret v. Chaler, Syndic, Louisiana Annual Reports*, 2: 874-876 (1847); *Thompson v. Milne, ibid.*, 4: 210 (1849).

fees were highly complex in their ramifications. A South Carolina plaintiff alleged that commissions had been charged upon each item in the account, upon the factor's balance, and three times upon the principal. Not only had interest been deducted on each bill from the day of purchase rather than the day of payment, but interest had itself accumulated interest.⁵² When factors' accounts were vague as to the use of funds, it was sometimes difficult for customers to grasp financial technicalities. Sometimes it was a matter of open discrimination. A Charleston house adopted a temporary policy of subtracting interest in its own favor, while refusing the same privilege when a balance was due the planter. "The money is of no use to us, as it is Subject to Call at any moment," argued one of the partners. "You ought not to be surprized if you loose some of your customers," replied a kinsman.⁵³

Much depended upon the alertness of the planter. Few were as vigilant as the Alabamian who checked all accounts and noted characteristically on one, "This Act [account] paid but not rected. To be taken to Mobile when I go."⁵⁴ Of a different stamp was the Louisianan who said that he was satisfied with the usual "reservation of errors" and had "no curiosity to look into it, until a final settlement."⁵⁵ In quite another category were those who detected discrepancies but failed to register protests. Such failure was generally tantamount to accepting the statement as correct.⁵⁶ Considering the laxity of planters in general, it might well be assumed that many travesties committed in the name of "usages of trade" or "clerical errors" went unnoticed or unchallenged. The system had its possibilities for the arbitrary use of funds.

⁵² *Walters & Walker v. McGirt, Meekins & Son, Richardson, South Carolina Law Reports*, 8: 288-290 (1855).

⁵³ J. K. Robinson to James M. Nelson, Charleston, January 15, 1851, and Nelson to Robinson, Cudoe [South Carolina], January 24, 1851, James M. Nelson Papers, Duke University Library.

⁵⁴ See James A. Tait's comment on Norris & Boykin Account Current, Mobile, December 17, 1839, Charles and James A. Tait Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History.

⁵⁵ *Dunbar et al. v. Bullard, Louisiana Annual Reports*, 2: 812 (1847).

⁵⁶ *Freeman v. Howell, ibid.*, 4: 197-198 (1849); *Boyce v. Smith, Dudley, South Carolina Law Reports*, 248-249 (1838).

Such devices for control, together with credit prices, tended to mire the planter in a debtor-creditor relationship. With all its exactions, this routine was continued despite the warnings of such reformers as M. W. Philips of Mississippi: "Draw bills! This bill business is the very thing that ruins us. *Keep out of debt and control your cotton.*"⁵⁷ Even after 1865 former planters complained of "long years of bondage" in which Charleston factors held sea-island growers.⁵⁸

It was commonplace to speak of "years of bondage," of "endless shackles of debt," and of "planters harnessed to the factor's plow." But the system of advances did not favor one side exclusively. If many planters found it well-nigh impossible to escape indebtedness, creditors had their own problems. The papers of William Bostwick, a Connecticut Yankee in Augusta, reveal the difficulties factors encountered in the collection of debts. After some years as a warehouse and commission merchant, Bostwick shifted in the early 'thirties to groceries and dry-goods, and spent almost two decades in this trade, while cajoling, threatening, and suing planters. Even after his departure in the late 'forties, there remained many outstanding accounts.⁵⁹ A Mobile factor, in advance to a client, finally sent his clerk upstate to obtain cotton, money, or negotiable paper.⁶⁰ And in the midst of financial issues created by the formation of the Confederacy, an old New Orleans factor, who was reputed to have made and lost a fortune, commented cynically: "Extend credit indeed to the Planters; who Knows them better than I do. & who has Suffered more. . . they would swamp any Government on Earth & themselves along with it."⁶¹ When a planter owed several creditors, the problem was infinitely more complex. Here the factor had to consider prior liens—"debts of superior dignity."

⁵⁷ *DeBow's Review*, 7: 411 (November, 1849).

⁵⁸ Guion Griffis Johnson, *A Social History of the Sea Islands, with Special Reference to St. Helena Island, South Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 1930), 70.

⁵⁹ Bostwick to George Scott, Augusta, May 29, 1834; to Charles A. Read, Augusta, March 3, 1838; to James A. Merriwether, Augusta, October 22, 1842; and to T. P. Pease, New Haven, March 25, 1847, William Bostwick Papers, Yale University Library.

⁶⁰ *Kirksey, et al. v. Bates, Alabama Reports*, 1: 304-305 (1840).

⁶¹ Maunsel White to J. D. B. DeBow, Deer Range [Louisiana], November 9, 1861, J. D. B. DeBow Papers, Duke University Library.

No less irritating were difficulties attending overadvances, the misuse of borrowed funds, and breaches of contract. In large part, the factor's dilemma stemmed from the peculiarities of the southern system, an economy of a colonial type: the presence of a planter class, with its demand for agricultural credit on an extensive basis, and the reliance upon paper rather than specie—upon bills of exchange, notes, orders, receipts, or drafts. Far from being self-sufficient, the factor himself depended almost entirely upon the credit system. His strength often lay not so much in his own means as in his access to various sources of capital. The financial state of many houses was somewhat nebulous, with a comparatively small investment in capital, a large backlog of acceptances, and no little stake in optimism. In 1826 the low price of cotton had occasioned a great many overdrafts, and a New Orleans commission merchant resolved on a radical change of policy: for "in the way we have gone on we were a perfect convenience to all the country & at the end of the season we have not a Dollar left."⁶² He spoke with palpable exaggeration; nevertheless, it is surprising how often factors were hard-pressed to raise even a small sum of money. The factor had his time of troubles, a critical period in which he was under the necessity of meeting the planter's bills at maturity and frequently lacked the funds or produce to do so. Small wonder that he sometimes despaired of the future, when debtor prodigality could elicit such commentaries as the following, distorted though it is:

The long credit which merchants and traders . . . are obliged to give the planters, is the subject of universal complaint among the former; and whatever credit the Carolinians may deserve for their "unaffected hospitality, affability, ease of manners, and address" . . . yet the payment of their debts can never be reckoned among their virtues. . . . When they receive money in advance, for their crops of cotton or rice, it is immediately squandered away in the luxuries of fashion, good eating and drinking, or an excursion to the northern states, where, after dashing about for a month or two with *tandems, curricles, livery servants, and outriders*, they frequently return home in the *stage coach*, with scarcely dollars enough in their pocket to pay their expenses on the road.⁶³

⁶² Wilkins & Linton to Josiah Stoddard Johnston, New Orleans, June 13, 1826, Josiah Stoddard Johnston Papers, Pennsylvania Historical Society.

⁶³ John Lambert, *Travels through Lower Canada, and the United States of North America, in the Years,*

It was particularly galling to advance money or accept drafts and then fail to receive the expected consignment of produce. Planters solicited loans and later shipped their crops wholly or in part to other merchants.⁶⁴ There were numerous instances where the factor financed the planter in anticipation of consignment, only to find that the returns were not sufficient to cover the loan.⁶⁵ Seldom were producers as conservative as the Georgian who contracted with his factors to advance nine cents per pound on the crop prior to sale, but declared that he expected no more than the value of the cotton, "as he wanted no anteing back on him."⁶⁶ The court records indicate that factors often found it necessary to "ante-back" because of overadvances. Literally thousands of these credits were based on a mere "understanding" or conversation. Such mutual confidence was highly laudable but not always prudent; in the absence of written agreement, it was difficult to prove the existence of a contract—a frequent avenue of escape for delinquent debtors. Though well-nigh indispensable to the plantation, this complex system of agricultural credit had its shortcomings.

Friction between planter and factor revolved chiefly about marketing, supplying, and banking, but other practices provoked mutual distrust. Planters who were themselves careless refused to tolerate these qualities in their factors. Absentee planters were one thing; a factor off the job was something else again. One Virginian wrote skeptically of a Petersburg commission merchant: "I understand Bowe is still in Richmond. I do not understand what he is at there. I don't think it looks well for him to be absent at this busy season from his Business."⁶⁷ Negligence in forwarding accounts or answering correspondence generally brought strong reaction and might result in a

change of factors.⁶⁸ Less frequently it was sheer incompetence. A Louisianan who had moved to the North and left his affairs in the hands of a local firm was incensed by the lack of cooperation—no sales accounts, no rent returns, and belongings either unshipped or lost. "Although I have repeatedly written on urgent business none of my communications have been answered." Planters should exercise discretion in trusting the management of their property to such negligent people. "The man is lazy and does not possess one grain of common gratitude."⁶⁹ Upon occasion a few skeptics came to question the ability of factors in general.

The factor had other grounds for dissatisfaction. Writers of the past and present have emphasized the fundamental nature of the services rendered by factor to planter. Yet the assistance of planter to factor was also highly significant. It is well to remember that this relationship involved in many cases a mutual exchange of favors in the form of loans, endorsements or guarantees, negotiable notes, and in general, a reciprocal use of credit. When a New Orleans factor expressed his appreciation for a token of confidence, "coming as it does . . . from a native Country Man—whose good Standing, in the planting Community & even *Kind* feelings toward me—without any patronage—would be of importance to my character & Stand before the Community,"⁷⁰ he was merely observing that the support of prominent planters might well mean the difference between success and failure. Lack of such support or the withdrawal of credit facilities could bring disaster. Thus the reaction of a factor when a planter relative failed to furnish the blank signatures deemed necessary for the transaction of certain business: "Is it from want of confidence [or] are you afraid to trust such documents in my hands?"⁷¹

Of course, it was irritating enough for a patron to change factors without explanation. Still more harmful was the effect of "talk" among planters

1806, 1807, and 1808 (3 vols., London, 1810), 2: 381-382.

⁶⁴ Lyons v. Lallande, *Louisiana Annual Reports*, 9: 601-602 (1854).

⁶⁵ Jones v. Somerville, Porter, *Alabama Reports*, 1: 437-438 (1835); *Jernigan, Lawrence & Company v. Wimberly*, *Georgia Reports*, 1: 220-221 (1846); *Fleming v. Hammond*, *ibid.*, 19: 146 (1855).

⁶⁶ *Hardeman & Hamilton v. Ford*, *Georgia Reports*, 12: 206 (1852).

⁶⁷ Jos. M. Sheppard to James Sheppard, Glencairn, Hanover County, [Virginia], November 21, 1840, James Sheppard Papers.

⁶⁸ Simon Magwood to Frances Butler, Charleston, December 12, 1826, Pierce Butler Papers.

⁶⁹ O. H. Spencer to Nathaniel Evans, [Elizabeth] Town, [New Jersey], April 16, 1817, Evans Papers.

⁷⁰ N. Scudder to St. John R. Liddell, New Orleans, March 26, 1856, Liddell Papers.

⁷¹ Will. Flower to Chas. L. Mathews, New Orleans, October 27, 1849, Mathews (Charles L., and family) Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University.

—of facts or rumors regarding incompetency, insolvency, speculation, or dishonesty. The incidence of such unfavorable publicity is shown by a pathetic plea from a Mobile factor:

I have been striving to get through with all my immediate liabilities or in fact all but my bank debts this season and find that I have a sufficiency of means which can be relied on during this spring to do it. . . . I could have worked through without any discredit, had not Genl [John] Pickens become so much enraged and spoke freely of it to different individuals who have spoken I presume of it here, I learned yesterday he was on his way here determined to have his money and I am now looking for him. I recd. a very severe letter from him on Sunday. . . . I hoped you would prevent the Genl. from saying anything as it would only be calculated to injure me, and not benefit him, but make my chances of paying my debts even worse. . . . you know the family I have to support, they are dependant on my exertions, and I hope I will not be charged with dishonesty. I will never defraud any one out of a dollar. . . .⁷²

The result was to threaten the factor's standing among his planter customers or perhaps to cause a "run on the bank." Likewise, it injured the merchant's reputation in the city and might well affect his credit facilities at home and elsewhere. It is only natural that factors thus victimized went to great lengths to clear away the clouds of suspicion.⁷³

Controversies involving individuals were sometimes accompanied by a diversity in viewpoint between planters and factors in general, a difference in outlook which may have reflected something of the historic distrust between producer and middleman. Often members of the one group tended to "see eye-to-eye" against the other. In this respect the planter's irritation from specific grievances may have influenced, and in turn been influenced by stereotypes. What manner of man was this factor? A cock-of-the-walk, if one can credit an Englishman's picture of New Orleans cotton merchants who "wore striped jackets, cocked their hats on one side with an air of defiance, and swung a sword stick between their

extended legs."⁷⁴ An outlander, said others; often a veritable bird of passage, who lived in the South only during the cotton season. Was it true that New Englanders had by 1820 monopolized the Charleston factorage business—Yankees who, having replaced the "native merchants, enlightened, wealthy, and influential," now remained aloof, contented with their large fortunes?⁷⁵ D. R. Hundley pointed an accusing finger at commission merchants who were outwardly respectable, yet willing to finance the slavetrader, and thereby enjoy a snug portion of the latter's proceeds without partaking of his social stigma.⁷⁶ Birds of a like feather were "Kit Swindler and Co.," a hypothetical New Orleans house described by Lewis Atherton in *The Southern Country Store*.⁷⁷ Or was the factor in reality a conservative businessman, trusted friend and servant, loyal to the planter and southern interests? In the light of these and other descriptions, factors were a highly contradictory group. Indeed, such stereotypes represent departures from strict truth. Yet the changing opinions of contemporaries are sometimes more significant than the actuality.

Contributing to the planter's state of mind was his ignorance of the city. If by chance he held the landed aristocrat's legendary contempt for the "vulgar pursuit of trade," if he were comparatively isolated and knew relatively little about city ways in general and city cotton transactions in particular, if times were bad and cotton prices low, and above all, if his individual relationship with the commission merchant had been an unhappy one, then the planter might listen with a receptive ear to stories about citified factors, sophisticated men of Big Business. He might readily believe rumors about "syndicates" or "combinations" which threatened the freedom

⁷² J. E. Alexander, *Transatlantic Sketches, Comprising Visits to the Most Interesting Scenes in North and South America, and the West Indies* (2 vols., London, 1833), 2: 16-17.

⁷³ Harriette Kershaw Leiding, *Charleston: Historic and Romantic* (Philadelphia, 1931), 202; E. S. Thomas, *Reminiscences of the Last Sixty-Five Years, Commencing with the Battle of Lexington* (2 vols., Hartford, 1840), 1: 34, 40-41; 2: 226.

⁷⁴ D. R. Hundley, *Social Relations in Our Southern States* (New York, 1860), 145-146.

⁷⁵ Opelousas Courier, May 13, 1854, cited in Atherton, *The Southern Country Store*, 32.

⁷⁶ J. Simpson to Samuel Pickens, Mobile, April 13, 1842, Samuel Pickens Papers.

⁷⁷ Byrne, Vance & Company to James Sheppard, New Orleans, February [28], 1847, James Sheppard Papers; *Donnell v. Jones, et al., Alabama Reports*, 13: 490-499 (1848); Davis, *Cotton Kingdom*, 148.

of navigation on the Alabama River.⁷⁸ His misgivings about the factor's specialized knowledge of the cotton trade—a field in which some planters had little more than vague notions—might give color to tales of designing middlemen leagued together to defraud the producer by means of drawbacks and other devices. Perhaps personal experience in court cases tried outside his own county or parish led him further to distrust the seaports, where mercantile influence and prestige were greater.⁷⁹ In short, even the rural South experienced something of the traditional antipathy between city and country.

At any rate, planters chafed at "systematic oppression." They believed themselves the victims of duplicity: the factor was extending the right hand of friendship, while rifling the planter's pocket with the left. In the light of available evidence, one may wonder whether some of these allegations were well-founded. There was inaccurate crop information, whether accidental or deliberate. Fraudulent selling was notorious. Some factors were also purchasers of cotton and hence tended toward a double standard of values. Not only was the producer saddled with various forms of open exaction; usury and more subtle practices such as average accounts, clothed in the guise of "custom," were by no means uncommon. Nevertheless, the relationship between factor and planter, considered in its entirety, suggests that these complaints were of comparatively little significance.

Factors as a group were hostile to innovation, particularly when reduced fees were contemplated. In 1855 a New Orleans factor announced the negotiation of a contract with a local cotton press: in the future, the cost of drayage, storage, and labor would be only one dollar instead of the usual four.⁸⁰ Whether this arrangement was successful is not disclosed. In one sense, it increased the risk to the producer, since the factor tended to become less responsible; seen from the mercantile standpoint, its directness implied the elimination of lucrative middleman's fees. After Georgia planters criticized the two and one half per cent sales commission charged by Savannah factors, a

correspondent of the *Daily Morning News* pointed out that this increase was due largely to the extension of railroads. And who had benefited most from such developments? The planters of the state. "Then we say why not live and let live?"⁸¹ When a Savannah firm announced its intention of handling cotton at 50 cents, a critic expressed his fear that the success of this experiment might result in forced retirement for the city's cotton sellers, thus deprived of their sole means of support.⁸² Such attempts at uniformity in Savannah must have seemed the more incongruous to Georgia and South Carolina growers, when fees in Charleston ranged from two and one half per cent to 50 cents or even less on the bale, and at least one Augusta firm advertised at 25 cents.⁸³ The trade was basically conservative and such schemes met with sharp disapproval.

On the other hand, factors sometimes attributed to calculated intent certain moves on the part of planters. In general the ante-bellum commercial conventions reserved for the factor a place within the southern framework; broadly speaking, they called for the cooperation of planters and factors.⁸⁴ Yet during a convention of the 'fifties, an orator could speak disparagingly of past meetings "designed to circumvent the commission merchant of New Orleans. . . . Every planter who had a dozen negroes wanted a railroad running by his house and another by his kitchen."⁸⁵ Though such sentiments may reflect nothing more than city or regional rivalry, the theme of these gatherings—

⁷⁸ Savannah *Daily Morning News*, June 3, 1857.

⁷⁹ Savannah *Republican*, [n. d.], quoted in Savannah *Daily Morning News*, August 1, 1857.

⁸⁰ *Dulin v. Caldwell & Company, Georgia Reports*, 29: 364 (1859); John P. Campbell, comp., *The Southern Business Directory and General Commercial Advertiser* (Charleston, 1854), 293.

⁸¹ Herbert Wender, *Southern Commercial Conventions, 1837-1859* (Baltimore, 1930), 10-11, *passim*; William Watson Davis, "Ante-bellum Southern Commercial Conventions," Alabama Historical Society, *Transactions*, 5: 153, 157, *passim* (1904).

⁸² Speech reported in *DeBow's Review*, 19: 625 (May, 1855), and quoted in Davis, "Ante-bellum Southern Commercial Conventions," 181. For additional reference to friction between planter and merchant, though in regard to cotton planters' conventions, rather than commercial gatherings, see Weymouth T. Jordan, "Cotton Planters' Conventions in the Old South," *Journal of Southern History*, 19: 322, *passim* (August, 1953).

⁷⁸ Minnie Clare Boyd, *Alabama in the Fifties: A Social Study* (New York, 1931), 94-95.

⁷⁹ Robert M. Davis, *The Southern Planter, the Factor and the Banker* (New Orleans, 1871), 4.

⁸⁰ N. Scudder to St. John R. Liddell, New Orleans, November 10, 1855, Liddell Papers.

commercial autonomy of the South, with the elimination of middlemen through direct trade with Europe—suggests that the history of antebellum commercial conventions, with their lack of positive accomplishment, may warrant further investigation.

But producers took even more decided action. In the late 'thirties planter resentment against Mobile factors reached so high a pitch that the Alabama legislative session of 1837 was the scene of acrimonious debate following the introduction of a bill to remedy alleged abuses in the sale of cotton. Although the measure, which provided for the establishment of a state marketing agency, was passed after a heated debate, action did not progress beyond the planning stage.⁸⁶ A local crop-reporting agency functioned for a time in Marengo County, Alabama.⁸⁷ In 1858 a Cotton Planters' Association met at Macon, Georgia, and appointed an agent for receiving, selling, and shipping cotton for Savannah and Charleston. The group expressed its desire that "planters shipping their cotton to either of the above markets will prefer their appointed agent."⁸⁸ Such experiments in producer control were interrupted by the Civil War.

Without considering its effects on the South at large, the burden of the factorage system fell unevenly upon the planter class. Business policy was influenced by many considerations. In some cases, factors were under obligation to their principals. Through individual arrangements or for purely personal reasons, they often refrained from charging commissions on unpaid accounts, assessing interest, or collecting other fees. There were additional reasons why growers did not remain in the same state of dependence upon the factor. In contrast to the colonial period with its predominantly English market, the staple producer of ante-bellum times lived relatively nearer the shipping-point; not infrequently, though location was but one of many considerations, his degree of autonomy varied in proportion to his distance from the seacoast. Planters strategically situated might expect to keep abreast of the market, withhold shipment of their cotton (depending upon transportation costs) for favorable

prices, and purchase their own provisions in town. Moreover, larger or more solvent planters, though they were apt to be at the mercy of the carriers, were perhaps less under the control of commission merchants. Some maintained their own transportation, obtained supplies elsewhere if they so desired, traded with several factors simultaneously, and shifted agents almost at will.⁸⁹ Whether factors discriminated against the smaller planter is a proposition exceedingly difficult of proof.

Regardless of individual relationships, planters in general chose largely, if by no means exclusively, to patronize the coast factor rather than the home merchant. That the choice was a wise one is open to question. Room for doubt lies not so much in the familiar sense of "shop at home and save," though seaport rates for supplies were not always lower or cotton prices higher. Rather, the crux of the situation seems to have been the planter's greater familiarity with things local. Given the dearth of evidence at hand, one can do no more than speculate that the city factor's gain at the producer's expense came above all in some of the highly technical and less well-known facets of this relationship: in money matters, particularly as regards exchange, with which some planters were familiar but few expert; in certain aspects of the trade with which the producer was not directly connected, especially transactions with cotton press operators, brokers, buyers, and other middlemen; and in the vagaries of double-entry bookkeeping, as expressed in "customary" fees, in "clerical errors," or in various hidden charges. That planters would have enjoyed more convenient arrangements with local merchants is problematical; at any rate, they would have been more likely to understand the local merchandising process. In the long run, the returns to the planter himself and to his own community might have been greater if his capital had circulated largely at home.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Hary Grant to Pierce Butler, Charleston, March 31, 1796, W. Mein to Butler, Savannah, March 15, 1803, and factors' correspondence at random, Pierce Butler Papers; similar correspondence in Singleton Papers; and Ralph B. Flanders, "Farish Carter, a Forgotten Man of the Old South," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 15: 148 (June, 1931).

⁹⁰ For discussion of the influence of the factorage system on southern economy, see Atherton, *Southern Country Store*, Ch. 2, and Stone, "The Cotton Factorage System of the Southern States," 557-565.

⁸⁸ William Garrett, *Reminiscences of Public Men in Alabama, for Thirty Years* (Atlanta, 1872), 44-47.

⁸⁷ Gray, *Agriculture in the Southern United States*, 2: 720.

⁸⁹ *DeBow's Review*, 25: 217 (August, 1858).

To say that the information now available on the factorage system comes mainly from plantation records is to imply that the association between planter and factor has been seen primarily from the producer's viewpoint. This is not strictly true. Nevertheless, the balance has favored the producer, and anything resembling a definitive judgment must necessarily await more detailed studies of commission merchants and their operations.

A comparative lack of information does not obviate the broad conclusion that neither side realized a very definite advantage. If indeed this were a "contest," it was in the larger sense a contest without a victory. A factor once wrote concerning a dispute over damaged cotton, "Who do you blame? the pickery, the boat, or ourselves?"⁸¹ Were he a philosopher or had he enjoyed the advantage of historical hindsight, he might better have advised his correspondent to blame it on the system. There was something enervating about the ante-bellum factorage process, bulwarked by tradition and unfriendly to innovation. To say the least, it was expensive for both producer and middleman; its often loose and informal basis of credit made it doubly dangerous; and its colonial foundations rendered all the more difficult a major break in the cake of custom.

Even with its many drawbacks, would a new system or even a major change in the old have been really satisfactory? Suppose direct trade with Europe had been established. Would the producer have found the Liverpool market less mysterious than the transactions in New Orleans? Just how long would a planters' association have continued to depend upon a single agent for

Charleston and Savannah? Considering the prevailing attitude toward governmental paternalism, how feasible was a state marketing agency? In the minds of many southerners such proposals for control, either through voluntary restriction or by law, had their limitations. Ideas of this kind were too far ahead of their time; they were overridden by a routine of two centuries' standing and by the incentive for individual gain. Intent on the production of a cash crop and basically hostile to regulation of any kind, most planters paid little more than lip service to these suggestions. They were alternately enthusiastic and lukewarm as their personal interests were affected. Their complaints varied with times of prosperity and depression, rising in the wake of the panics of 1837 and 1857. Among them there was too much individualism and too little unity of effort.

Indeed, a much sounder brief can be made for harmony than for discord between ante-bellum planter and factor. For all their carping and complaining, for all their differences great and small, it is doubtful whether the one could have dispensed with the other. In 1793 the suit of a South Carolina planter against a Charleston factor was tried before a jury composed equally of planters and merchants. The former stood unanimously for the plaintiff, the latter for the defendant. Since neither side would yield, the case was dissolved by mutual consent.⁸² The decision was perhaps symbolic of the relationship between planter and factor in the Old South. Perhaps each really hoped, and sincerely tried, to attend carefully and closely to his own interest and in some way exert a balance, to their mutual benefit. Let change come with the passing of time.

⁸¹ Maunsel White & Company to Mrs. Mary Coffee, New Orleans, April 23, 1841, John Coffee Papers.

⁸² *Executors of Godfrey v. Forrest, Bay, South Carolina Law Reports*, 1: 300-301 (1793).

HENRY FORD AND THE AGRICULTURAL DEPRESSION OF 1920-1923*

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Periods of financial panic produce ugly consequences and the depression in the United States during the early 1920's was no exception. Although business men felt the shock of this slump, it was the farmer who suffered longest. After the prices of farm crops soared to a high point in January, 1920, the market weakened, then plunged downward during the following 17 months. When cotton growers complained of low prices in 1920, Warren G. Harding suggested they "quit talking calamity and make the most of a bad situation."¹ By November, 1920, market prices were 33 per cent lower than the level of the previous year and by July, 1921, they were down 85 per cent.² Henry C. Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture, in November, 1921, estimated the purchasing power of the principal farm crops to be a little more than half of what it was on an average for the period 1910 to 1914.³ Robert LaFollette announced in January, 1924, that 600,000 farmers had gone bankrupt and farm values had declined 13 billion dollars during the last three years.⁴

* This paper was read at a joint meeting of the Agricultural History Society and the Mississippi Historical Association at Madison, Wisconsin, April 23, 1954.

¹ H. W. Macrosty, "Inflation and Deflation in the United States and the United Kingdom, 1919-1923," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 90: 55 (1927).

² Theodore Saloutos and John D. Hicks, *Agricultural Discontent in the Middle West, 1900-1939* (Madison, 1951), 100.

³ James H. Shideler, "The Development of the Parity Price Formula for Agriculture 1919-1923," *Agricultural History*, 27: 81 (July, 1953).

⁴ Data compiled by W. P. Kinney, Chicago, August 19, 1924. Manuscript in the Ford Motor Company Archives, Fair Lane, Dearborn, Michigan. Henry Ford Business Correspondence, The Ford-Ferguson File, Accession 380, Box 13, No. 08051. Hereafter this source will be cited as Henry Ford Business Correspondence. Some of the documents in this collection were examined before they had been catalogued. Such documents are cited below by author and date.

LaFollette, using information provided by the Department of Agriculture, showed that 40 per cent of the

The damage caused by the depression cannot be measured in statistics alone, for beyond this data were the individuals who suffered adversity—persons caught in a bewildering atmosphere of frustration. To these, the crisis became a grim experience. Reduced incomes, the denial of luxuries, and the lowering of living standards brought disillusionment to many.

The sentimental novelist who pictured the sheriff foreclosing on the old homestead did not always portray mythological characters. Too many farm families in real life failed to be rescued by the timely arrival of a beneficent hero. Fortunately, most of those in financial difficulties accepted their fate stoically, but others lost courage and some became bitter. An irate farmer writing to *The Southern Cultivator* in 1921 fumed, "For God's sake, as well as the farmers, stop harping . . . on this line of pessimism. Allow each farmer to seek his own salvation. He is going to do as he pleases irrespective of you or anyone else. . . ." ⁵ An unhappy Californian, contemptuous of the middleman, complained:

Did you know that we are the only people on the face of the earth that make an honest living? And did you know that we are compelled to work 16 hours a day, every week in the year to get ahead enough to keep you lazy devils and have enough left to keep our families. It is a downright shame. I tell you we have lived on nothing at our house, except corn bread and bacon, until I have actually got bristles growing on my back. . . .⁶

For the most part, however, farmers took more positive steps to improve their incomes. To be sure, in retrospect, these efforts appear feeble when compared with the magnitude of the economic problems of rural America during the early

farmers in South Dakota were virtually bankrupt in 1924. In Colorado the percentage was 42 per cent; in North Dakota, 50 per cent; in Wyoming, 51 per cent; and in Montana, 62 per cent.

⁵ *The Southern Cultivator*, 79: 2 (April 15, 1921).

⁶ *Farm Implements* (Minneapolis), December 30, 1922, p. 4.

1920's. Apparently it was commonly believed that the depression would be of short duration. Perhaps the farm headache could be cured with aspirin without resorting to major surgery.

One type of remedial program emphasized the idea of self-help. Thus farmers were urged to adopt more progressive methods, to use better machinery, to improve their livestock, to sow better seed, and to eliminate wasteful practices. Co-operative schemes became almost a fetish. Frank O. Lowden, looking hopefully on the 9,000 farm co-operatives doing two billion dollars worth of business in 1923, stated that, "cooperatives bring results when rationally directed. We need waste no time citing any of the well-known instances in point. . . ."⁷

A second approach to farm relief called for state or national legislation. The American Farm Bureau Federation, the Farmer's Union, and the Grange, as well as the Non-Partisan League, the Farmer Labor Party, and the Farm Bloc in Congress suggested a variety of proposals. Support was given to such measures as state ownership of banks and grain elevators, rural credit agencies, long-term loans to farmers, freight rate revision, marketing reforms, and the adoption of a parity formula for the stabilization of prices and of farm commodities.

A third means of seeking agricultural assistance is found in direct appeals of farmers to men of wealth for financial aid. The motives here were obvious. During hard times, the self-help recommendations and legislative programs at best seemed to provide only long-range solutions to the farm problem. But a farmer threatened with foreclosure could not await the results of the next election or the adoption of favorable legislation. He grasped at any means which might offer promise of assistance. Many hoped the rich would provide some form of direct and immediate relief. Since Henry Ford was the most prominent industrialist in the United States at the time, he became a symbol of hope to thousands of afflicted farmers.

The rise of Ford from a relatively unknown figure in 1900 to world prominence in the 1920's is a well-known story. He realized that technologically America was moving from the age of steam power into an era of gasoline power. Sensing

this profound change, he joined others who anticipated the demand for automobiles. His success was phenomenal. The company founded in 1903 grew into an industrial giant which by 1922 had manufactured over 5,000,000 automobiles and 200,000 farm tractors—all valued at approximately three billion dollars.⁸

During this time the Model T, featuring a 20 horsepower motor mounted on a simple chassis, became a familiar sight throughout America. Its dependability and low cost, rather than its beauty, earned for it the tribute, "Tin Lizzy, it gets you there and it gets you back." The *Milwaukee News* on January 13, 1913, reported the new Ford could make 25 miles to the gallon of gasoline; hence it would quickly make the horse and buggy obsolete.⁹

As an individual, Ford became identified with his product and thus received wide publicity in rural and urban areas alike. Whether Ford was a shrewd Yankee with a knack for capturing public attention or whether natural circumstances forced him into the spotlight is still a matter of conjecture. Regardless of motives, he made headlines. The editor of the *Rural New Yorker* on June 9, 1923, sagely observed that "The world is full of stories about Henry Ford. From Alaska to Africa his name is mentioned whenever people meet and the air smells of gasoline."¹⁰ The *Prairie Farmer* in 1918 claimed that Ford received more free advertising than any other man in the United States.¹¹ The *Journal of Commerce* in 1921 suggested that "One need not mention Ford—he mentions himself."¹²

Perhaps it is ironic that the wealthiest man in America should have the strongest appeal to laboring men and farmers. Among the poorer classes, Ford came to be regarded as a humanitarian, whereas John D. Rockefeller, who refined the gasoline burned in the "flivver," was often regarded

⁸ Ford Motor Company Special Data, List of Ford Interests and Statistical Tables, Accession 285, Box 58, Henry Ford Business Correspondence. These tables reveal the following figures for 1903-22: Number of automobiles sold, 5,473,458, valued at \$1,542,631,708.05; Number of tractors sold prior to Jan. 1922, 199,447; Total sales from Sept. 30, 1903, to Dec. 31, 1922, \$2,993,515,708.98.

⁹ *Milwaukee News*, Jan. 13, 1913, p. 1.

¹⁰ *Rural New Yorker*, 82: 832 (June 9, 1923).

¹¹ *Prairie Farmer*, 90: 514 (June 1, 1918).

¹² *Journal of Commerce* (Chicago), Feb. 10, 1921, p. 1.

⁷ Frank O. Lowden, The Co-operative Cure, manuscript in the Ford-Ferguson File, Accession 380, Box 1, Nos. 00291, 00292, 00293, Henry Ford Business Correspondence.

as a sinister financier and tool of Wall Street. In the early 1920's the Ford name had already become a symbol quite similar to that of a folklore hero. His success exemplified the best in Horatio Alger and to many his life took on the stature of a Paul Bunyan. Reality became confused with legend. People often visualized Ford as they thought him to be, not as he was. It was this aspect of the Ford publicity that gave a dramatic touch to the information disseminated by a handful of secretaries in the offices of the Engineering Building in Dearborn, Michigan.

Furthermore, the newspapers' emphasis upon Ford's liberal ideas endeared him to debt-ridden farmers and grass roots folk who responded sympathetically to concepts of change. The announcement of the five-dollar day for employees in 1914 fell on receptive ears. The distribution of 48 million dollars of company profits to the factory workers from 1914 to 1917 convinced many that Ford loved the common man.¹³ An Illinois farmer admiringly responded, "Ye Gods you are making it tough for the hoggish-grab-all crowd to criticize you."¹⁴ Ford's temperate habits appealed to the religious minded; his pronouncements against war consoled the pacifists. When the *Chicago Tribune* called Ford an anarchist in 1916, the auto magnate brought a million dollar libel suit against the newspaper. A jury of farmers at Mt. Clemens, Michigan, in July, 1919, declared the *Tribune* guilty and awarded Ford six cents in damages. Thousands of letters reached Ford during the trial, many of which suggested that if he were an anarchist there should be more of them in the country.

Then too Ford's belief that the use of power machinery could remove much of the drudgery from farm work brought encouragement to rural people. His industrial success gave credence to his predictions that cheap alcohol fuels would soon be

derived from corn stalks, potatoes, sawdust, and garbage. He argued that modern farmers equipped with the latest machines could do the year's major farm jobs in 20 days. When he announced in 1921 that "the cow must go" because a mechanical cow might soon be available (presumably mass-produced, for sale F.O.B. Detroit, and with built-in interchangeable udders), the news was almost electrifying.¹⁵

Although American farmers knew of Ford's activities, it is difficult to estimate accurately the extent of their faith in his ability to solve their economic problems. Surveys of public opinion must be viewed with caution. However, if one may judge from the information found in agricultural journals and in some of the records in the National Archives in Washington, D.C., as well as in the large correspondence files of Ford himself, there is a good deal of evidence that the average farmer had considerable respect for Ford personally and that a remarkably large number of them expected him to aid those in financial distress.

That destitute people should ask a millionaire for financial aid is not surprising. A frantic farmer's wife living near Davis, South Dakota, writing to Ford in 1922 pleaded: "Our house burned down, my husband is worrying himself to death. We are in debt. Times are hard in Dakota. Can you help us. . . ."¹⁶ Many who were long on good intentions but short on cash, signed promissory notes and mailed them to Dearborn, hoping that the loans would be granted. A plea from Montana in 1921 reads:

I have been farming in Montana for many years raising wheat and cattle. Recently I have had severe losses and I am likely to lose my home. I need \$4,000 at once so I can finance myself over this calamity. If you can help me with a loan promptly, I will greatly appreciate your kindness.¹⁷

Various schemes by which Ford might bolster grain prices were conceived. A common request suggested that he go into the grain pits and buy up farm commodities, thus creating a bull market that would force prices upward. No mention was made regarding the disposition of this grain but

¹³ Ford Motor Company Special Data, List of Ford Interests and Statistical Tables, Accession 285, Box 58, Henry Ford Business Correspondence. The distribution of the Ford Motor Company profits among employees included:

1914.....	\$5,838,929.80
1915.....	7,859,942.11
1916.....	13,916,834.63
1917.....	20,684,108.91
Total.....	\$48,299,815.45

¹⁴ Harry Lyons, Evanston, Ill., to Henry Ford, Sept. 30, 1918. Henry Ford Business Correspondence.

¹⁵ *Minneapolis Journal*, March 18, 1921, p. 1.

¹⁶ Mrs. Henry H. B——, Davis, South Dakota, to Henry Ford, March 25, 1922. Henry Ford Business Correspondence.

¹⁷ Frank B——, Molt, Montana, to Henry Ford, Nov. 23, 1921. *Ibid.*

apparently he was expected to hold it until prices improved. An Iowa farmer in 1921 insisted he could not exist on 18 cent oats and recommended that Ford buy 18 million bushels of oats to bolster the market.¹⁸ The *Aberdeen Daily News* in South Dakota carried the headlines, "Ford to Bid on Dakota Wheat," and "Ford Plans to Rent Elevators in Duluth and Chicago."¹⁹ The American Wheat Grower's Association of Minneapolis asked Ford for \$250,000 to help promote their co-operative marketing venture.²⁰ Some grain farmers urged Ford to support a higher tariff on Canadian imported grain or that he break the binder twine monopoly. "Why should a grain drill cost as much as a Ford roadster?" asked a real estate man in Ipswich, South Dakota, in 1921. "Why can't you manufacture farm implements on a mass production basis to reduce their cost . . . ?"²¹

Livestock men likewise sought assistance. The Highland Ranching Company Ltd. with offices in Edmonton, Alberta, asked Ford to finance the raising of a herd of 6,000 cattle in three western provinces.²² A similar petition from a Michigan farmer in 1920 begged for five million dollars to stock certain regions in the state.²³ Midwestern banks also asked the "Midas of Michigan Avenue" for loans during the dark days of the depression.²⁴

In the South, when cotton prices dropped from 40 to 14 cents a pound in 1921, thousands looked to Ford for some kind of relief. An Alabama planter implored him to purchase 300,000 bales of cotton to boost prices.²⁵ Senator N. B. Deal of South Carolina wired the Detroit industrialist on May 8, 1923, explaining that if Ford did nothing more than make a statement to the press saying cotton prices were too low, it would frighten the bears

and they would stop depressing the market.²⁶ Since the rumor persisted that cotton brokers were in collusion with cotton mill owners to maintain low prices for raw cotton, new leadership and new marketing methods seemed mandatory. When Aaron Sapiro began organizing farmers into Cotton Growers Co-operative Associations to pool the crop for marketing purposes, Ford was deluged with letters asking advice in the matter. A South Carolina share cropper wrote, "I beg of you, if you know anything about this system of handling cotton, let me know at once."²⁷ Another cotton grower demanded:

I want you to lead three million cotton planters as one man. George Washington, Napoleon and Foch led men to fight with guns while our battle will be fought with brain force. . . . Since South Carolina was the first to secede in 1860, now South Carolina will secede from Wall Street.²⁸

The *Southern Cultivator*, however, pointed to a surplus of nine billion bales in the United States in 1920 and suggested the futility of overproducing and then blaming Wall Street for the low prices.²⁹

In hard times, people tend to complain about the scarcity of money and the absence of credit. Caught short on cash in the early 1920's, farmers showed a weakness for greenbackism and other soft money panaceas. In addition, debtors frequently assumed that financiers, especially those designated as the "Eastern International Bankers," were ogres who dominated the financial system, who charged excessive interest rates, and who carelessly permitted bank failures to wipe out life savings. Even the Federal Reserve System came to be suspected of hoarding money and, in a sense, of becoming like the doctor whose operation was successful but the patient died. A cattleman in Washington State in 1922 charged that the bankers' insistence of the maintenance of the gold standard accentuated financial panics and unemployment.

Just as the butcher skins a steer with a knife so do the banks skin the public. The banker holds the purse

¹⁸ Ford-Ferguson File, Accession 380, Box 2. *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Aberdeen Daily News*, Aug. 10, 1921, p. 1.

²⁰ Ford-Ferguson File, Accession 380, Box 11. American Wheat Growers Association, Minneapolis, to Henry Ford, Nov. 6, 1923. Henry Ford Business Correspondence.

²¹ Hy B——, Ipswich, S. Dak., to Henry Ford, Oct. 6, 1922. *Ibid.*

²² Highland Ranching Company Ltd., Edmonton, Alberta, to Henry Ford, Nov. 7, 1922. *Ibid.*

²³ Harland B——, Mt Clemens, Mich., to Henry Ford, May 3, 1920. *Ibid.*

²⁴ C. A. L——, Aneta, N. Dak., to Henry Ford, Sept. 9, 1922. *Ibid.*

²⁵ Merrill S——, Crowley, La., to Henry Ford, June 5, 1922. *Ibid.*

²⁶ Telegram, N. B. Deal, Greenville, South Car., to Henry Ford, May 12, 1923. *Ibid.*

²⁷ L. A. M——, Latta, South Car., to Henry Ford, April 20, 1923. *Ibid.*

²⁸ Ford-Ferguson File, Accession 380, Box 10, No. 06367. *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Southern Cultivator*, 79: 2 (March 1, 1921).

strings of the nation. He is the State. Mr. Ford, you have the confidence of the common people. you command publicity, you have the money, you can accomplish the abolition of the gold standard. Do it Henry. The way to do it is to do it. The time is now. . . .³⁰

Meanwhile, Ford gave the impression that he sympathized with inflationary monetary policies. He permitted stories to circulate indicating that he believed interest did not stimulate honest production, that bondholders were parasitical and as obnoxious as slaveholders, and that it was folly to worship gold as a standard of value. He was quoted as saying, "The difference between me and a capitalist is that I earn my living honestly. A capitalist loans out his money, collects the interest, and lets the other fellow do the work."³¹ "Get the gambling aristocrats to work. . . . A capitalist doesn't work at all. His money works for him. . . ."³²

When Ford faced a financial crisis in 1921 and it appeared that he must borrow approximately 75 million dollars, the *Denver Post* ran banner headlines: "HENRY FORD BATTLES WALL STREET TO KEEP CONTROL OF PROPERTY."³³ Ford raised sufficient money within his own organization to meet the emergency and he was reported to have said that he would tear down his factories brick by brick with his own hands before he would deal with Wall Street.³⁴

The farmers' faith in Ford increased when, on July 8, 1921, the Detroit "Motor King" at the invitation of the United States government offered to pay five million dollars for a 99 year lease of the installations at Muscle Shoals, Tennessee. Hopes soared in the belief that Ford would break the British-Chilean nitrate monopoly and produce cheap fertilizers for agricultural purposes. Electric power would industrialize the South, unemployment vanish, and manufactured goods decline in price. All this could be had without additional taxation or the meddling of the bankers.³⁵

³⁰ Henry S——, Seattle, to Henry Ford, Jan. 26, 1922. Henry Ford Business Correspondence.

³¹ Frank Bonville, *What Henry Ford is Doing* (Seattle, 1920) 14, quoting the *Chicago Herald*.

³² *Ibid.*, 8, quoting the *Dearborn Independent*.

³³ *Denver Post*, Feb. 1, 1921, p. 1.

³⁴ *Hamilton Journal* (Ohio), March 1, 1921, p. 1.

³⁵ "The Henry Ford Muscle Shoals Offer. Letter from the Secretary of War Transmitting the Henry

Strong support for this proposal came from Southern and Midwestern states. Eleven senators, 46 representatives, and leaders of the major farm organizations supported the plan.³⁶ The Oklahoma and Alabama state legislatures passed resolutions urging Congress to adopt the measure. The Nebraska legislature asked Ford to consider the development of hydroelectric power in that state.³⁷ Scores of Chamber of Commerce groups requested that Congress give Ford the green light at Muscle Shoals. The *Rural New Yorker* on March 11, 1922, claimed that millions of farmers had written Congress demanding that Ford's bid for this project be accepted.³⁸ A farmer in Georgia, writing to President Harding, explained that the Ford proposal remained of highest importance to citizens of the South. "I need not argue," he added, "that nine out of ten people have the utmost confidence in Henry Ford. He is one of the few men who have acquired great wealth without lining his pathway to success with the wrecked hopes of his less fortunate competitors. He is willing to live and let live. . . ."³⁹ A similar plea from Alabama addressed

Ford Muscle Shoals Offer." 67 Cong., 2 Sess. *House Document* 167, serial 8105 (1922).

³⁶ Senators leading the fight in favor of Ford's bid for Muscle Shoals included E. F. Ladd of North Dakota, Arthur Capper of Kansas, and J. T. Heflin of Alabama. Bernard Baruch, Herbert Hoover, and Samuel Gompers also favored the proposal.

³⁷ Clyde H. Baneard, Secretary of the Nebraska State Senate, Lincoln, to Henry Ford, Feb. 20, 1923. Henry Ford Business Correspondence.

³⁸ *Rural New Yorker*, 82: 903 (June 30, 1923).

³⁹ James A. Metcalf, Atlanta, to President Harding, Sept. 2, 1921. Henry Ford Business Correspondence. A copy of this letter was sent to Henry Ford.

Ford's offer to the U. S. Government for Muscle Shoals was an extremely detailed and complicated proposal. Ford's original offer on July 8, 1921, provided that the U. S. Government should complete building dams No. 1 and 2 at Muscle Shoals at a cost of approximately 50 million dollars. Ford agreed to pay an annual rental of \$1,680,000 to the federal government until the 50 million cost of the completed dams was amortized. In December, 1921, Ford made a second proposal of the acquisition of the Muscle Shoals property. Because of the delay in Congress and because of growing opposition to the Ford bid by varied interests, Ford withdrew his offer for Muscle Shoals on October 15, 1924. Senator George Norris of Nebraska favored government ownership of Muscle Shoals. Many Eastern business leaders also opposed the Ford proposal,

to John D. Weeks, Secretary of War, read:

You will note from my letter that I am no university graduate, but I know a few things. I am writing in regard to Henry Ford's offer or bid for Muscle Shoals. You are not much inclined to consider Ford's bid to any serious degree. I with millions of others think Ford is the logical man for the place. . . . I was reared in a farm in Georgia and I know what the people want, and they are going to get tired of waiting sometime. I am just one of the common herd, but we are going to be heard. . . .⁴⁰

Apparently some of the agrarian discontent found expression in the "Ford for President Movement," which reached the peak of its strength in 1923. In rural areas a segment of the political malcontents cast friendly eyes upon the auto magnate. The *Rural New Yorker* after polling public opinion in 1923 concluded that farmers were giving Ford strong support as a candidate for the presidential nomination.⁴¹ A *Collier's Weekly* poll showed Ford and Harding running even in the popularity race. When Senator Henry F. Ashurst of Arizona returned from a tour of 19 states in May, 1923, he reported a spontaneous boom with old party leaders upset by Ford's personal following among the rank and file in rural districts. Farmers thought Ford would give them low freight rates and cheap fertilizers and people in the small towns believed he would reduce the prices of goods bought by consumers.⁴²

Various farm groups formed clubs to work for Ford's election; others signed petitions and mailed them to Detroit. These letters carried such messages as: "Come on lead us out." "You are the Moses for 80 per cent of us." "No more politicians, lawyers or generals for us." "You have ginger, gumption and guts." A farmer in Utah re-echoed the plea:

Now we farmers want you to make the race. We will all vote for you. All you need to do is to state you will run. The time is ripe for a third party because the common people are tired of slavery. We are sure you will do your best to strike the shackles from the farmers and laboring class that the capitalists have bound therewith. I pray especially the fertilizer companies and the private electric power companies.

⁴⁰ R. P. Moloney, Birmingham, to the Honorable Mr. Weeks, Secretary of War, Nov. 10, 1921. Office of Engineers, War Department, National Archives, Washington, D. C., Nos. 121502-1262.

⁴¹ *Rural New Yorker*, 82: 903 (June 30, 1923).

⁴² *Detroit Times*, May 27, 1923, p. 1.

God that you will deliver us from the damnable mess the politicians have gotten us into. . . .⁴³

The *Philadelphia Ledger* on May 31, 1923, insisted that there was a "sort of mass hypnosis about the Ford craze."⁴⁴ The opposition to Ford came with corresponding intensity. Eastern financiers, industrialists, and conservative newspapers insisted that Ford's election would be a national disaster. The *Chicago Tribune* suggested that if Ford were elected president, the American people should put out to sea in lifeboats.⁴⁵

Since public opinion is difficult to estimate quantitatively, the amount of faith of rural Americans placed in Henry Ford during this depression is somewhat intangible. However, the plethora of documentary evidence indicates that the hard times produced psychological reactions among a large segment of the agrarian population. This emotional tension caused many to look to Ford as the "Great White Father" of the twentieth century. To these, "Uncle Henry" could be expected to bring economic relief as readily as the congressmen in the nation's capital. Of course, the discontented were eager to accept aid from any source, public or private.

Psychologically, part of this naïve faith in Ford came from the common knowledge that the Detroit industrialist had maintained his interest in agriculture. Since he supervised the operations on approximately 6,000 acres of farm land in Michigan, it was assumed he understood agrarian problems. The *Literary Digest* stated that farmers tended to respect men such as Lowden and Ford because they were farmers as well as business men.⁴⁶ This vocational combination merited respect, for the prestige of the business men remained exceptionally high in a day characterized by Calvin Coolidge's remark that "the business of America is business." If business leaders could engineer miracles in production, they certainly should be able to master the science of government as well. Most of the petitions requesting Ford to run for the presidency in 1923 were prefaced with the statement: "We the undersigned believe that this nation needs a strong, able, patriotic and suc-

⁴³ John W. Moss, Hoopes, Utah, to Henry Ford, May 28, 1923. Henry Ford Business Correspondence.

⁴⁴ *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, May 31, 1923, p. 1.

⁴⁵ *The Tennessean* (Nashville), Aug. 27, 1918, p. 9, quoting the *Chicago Tribune*.

⁴⁶ *The Literary Digest*, Oct. 27, 1923, p. 13.

cessful business man as its chief executive."⁴⁷ An Oklahoma farmer, urging Ford to make this race, implored, "We want a man of business, not buncombe."⁴⁸

It is significant to note that the farmers' supplications to Ford did not suggest a radical change in the structure of government. To be sure, Ford was expected to act like Santa Claus, but his methods were to be consistent with laissez faire capitalism. Men demanded that the rate at which the money trickled down from the rich to the poor should be accentuated. This phase of rural conservatism may have been strengthened by the thought of a depression of short duration. Apparently no one could foresee the fiasco of 1929. Then too, most of the information reaching the rural people came from conservative sources. The farmer's local newspaper usually did not incite one to riot. Farm organizations tended to honor respectability. The agricultural journals presented arguments which for the most part would do little violence to Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanac*. J. R. Howard, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, in writing to Henry Ford on December 24, 1921, indicated that his big hope for agriculture lay in better marketing methods.⁴⁹ Herbert Myrick, editor of *Farm and Home*, in the early 1920's insisted that the farmer could not be helped by doles or weak paternalism. Rather individuals should be inspired to "work out their own salvation."⁵⁰ A member of the staff of *The Farmer* on June 30, 1919, wrote to Professor B. H. Hibbard of the Wisconsin College of Agriculture requesting that he support the R. C. Millikin plan for rural credit. The virtues of this scheme were convincing for it offered self-help instead of government help; self-control rather than government control. "Self-restraint and self-reliance are the valuable lessons it will teach," the writer claimed, and added, "I believe its enactment into law would do more to thwart the present socialistic trend than anything imaginable. . . ."⁵¹

Obviously, the farmers who expected Ford to

give them immediate assistance were to suffer disappointment. This disappointment came not because Ford lacked interest in farmers or that he failed to have positive suggestions. The difficulty lay in the fact that worried farmers, experiencing hard times, wanted relief at once; Ford offered long-range plans. The underdog sought aid from outside interests; Ford recommended the "bootstrap" formula of self-help. Farmers begging for charity received good advice. Ford's tips for the day smacked too much of the general palaver cluttering up the farm journals. In short, those in distress found little consolation in Ford's admonition to be more progressive, to utilize more mechanical power in farm work, to be efficient, and above all, to be self-reliant.

Basically, rural people misunderstood the real intentions of the American millionaire. Estimates of him became confused because the publicity appearing in the *Dearborn Independent* and other newspapers often contradicted the information sent out to individuals by the secretaries who answered the avalanche of letters that arrived daily at the factory offices. Stories in the press frequently presented Ford as a crusader for justice for the common people. Naturally, many were convinced that he intended to enter the public arena and lead the fight in person. The replies to personal letters, however, reveal that Ford had no intention of divorcing himself from his business activities and devoting his life to the distribution of alms among the farmers. This is abundantly clear in the outgoing letters from Ford's secretaries. The response to appeals reiterate such comments as: "Ford does not invest money outside his own business. We have no specialist in our employ who has made a study of these farm problems."⁵²

Although an evaluation of Ford's contribution to American agriculture and his philanthropy is beyond the scope of this paper, it is interesting to note that when he did take action, he chose his own methods of procedure. He invariably acted as a lone wolf. He was skeptical of experts. He defined problems in his own terms and then attempted to solve them in his own way. Thus he carried on experiments on his Michigan farms, he

⁴⁷ Henry Ford Business Correspondence, Accession 285, Box 173.

⁴⁸ J. J. Parsons, Duncan, Okla. to Henry Ford, May 20, 1923. *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ J. R. Howard, Chicago, to Henry Ford, Sept. 20, 1921, Ford-Ferguson File, Accession 380, Box 2, No. 00739. *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Accession 380, Box 3, No. 02725. *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Accession 380, Box 1, No. 00454. *Ibid.*

⁵² E. G. Liebold, Dearborn, Michigan, to O. S. Fisher, Extension Agronomist, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., Feb. 2, 1924. Henry Ford Business Correspondence.

financed agricultural schools in Georgia, he showed an interest in farm chemistry, and he maintained a genuine lifetime interest in agriculture. But during the early 1920's he consistently shunned meeting in conference with farm leaders or members of the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D. C. Even during the negotiations for Muscle Shoals, there is no evidence that he ever attended a congressional hearing to discuss it. In like fashion, he also shied away from the meetings of the Automobile Manufacturers Association. He preferred to be unresponsive to the imaginative dreams of others and tended to follow Emerson's dictum, "Trust thyself!"

Although debtors needed to turn to the government eventually for direct subsidies, the publicity associated with Ford's career may have possessed some value. The provocative press releases from Dearborn dramatized the problems of the underprivileged; they injected a liberal tone into current controversies; they gave a sense of dignity to the work of reform; and created a more militant spirit among those concerned with the welfare of ordinary people.

But the Ford myth persisted. Since he could build low cost cars, trucks, and tractors, it was assumed that he could also solve economic, political, and social problems of rural America. A correspondent in Alabama expressed this sentimental notion in a letter to Ford in 1926:

We of the South affectionately acclaim you, instead of Lincoln, as the Great Liberator. Lincoln has freed his thousands, you have freed your ten thousands. The rutted roads on mountain sides and water sogged wheel tracts of low lands have been smoothed that the wheels of Fords might pass. The sagging barbed wire gates of barren cotton patches and blighted corn fields have been thrown open that brainblinded and soulblinded recluses might ride joyously into the world with their families in Fords. An army of white clad serfs on small Southern farms in Ford cars and trucks are pushing onward and upward into a conscious heirship in the nations treasure of civilized living. . . .⁴³

These letters, multiplied by thousands, reflected a widespread and simple faith in Ford, and the fixed belief that an understanding bond existed between the writers and this man of immense wealth.

⁴³ Ford Ferguson Files, Accession 380, Box 22. *Ibid.*

DIPLOMATS AND PLANT COLLECTORS: THE SOUTH AMERICAN COMMISSION, 1817-1818

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The South American Commission of 1817-1818 was the occasion for the first botanical exploration in South America by a trained United States botanist, and it aroused much interest in the introduction of seeds and plants from South America. These botanical and horticultural achievements have been overlooked in the published histories of the Commission, even though they have been more lasting than the political results of the Commission's activities.¹ Actually, the Commission had

little immediate influence on the policies of either the United States or foreign governments toward the South American revolutionists.²

The Commission was appointed solely as a diplomatic body; there is nothing in its instructions even remotely related to botany or plant exploration.³ There were several reasons for sending the

¹ The fullest secondary accounts of the Commission are Watt Stewart, "The South American Commission, 1817-1818," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 9: 31-59 (Feb. 1929); A. P. Whitaker, *United States and the Independence of Latin America, 1800-1830* (Baltimore, 1941), 229-243, 248-253; E. Pereira Salas, *La Misión Bland en Chile* (Santiago, Chile, 1936); and Laura Bornholdt, *Baltimore and Early Pan-American-*

ism; A Study in the Background of the Monroe Doctrine (Northampton, Mass., 1949), 81-108. A shorter but useful discussion appears in H. M. Wriston, *Executive Agents in American Foreign Relations* (Baltimore, 1929), 219-224, 416-419.

² Stewart, *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 9: 59 (Feb. 1929).

³ W. R. Manning, ed., *Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States Concerning the Independence of the Latin-American Nations* (New York, 1925), 1: 42-45, 47-49.

Commission: public opinion was pressing the Government to take some action relative to South American independence; the Government needed correct information regarding the course of the revolution; and the United States wished to retain the good will of the new governments.⁴

The initial step toward the appointment of a Commission was taken by President Monroe on April 25, 1817, when he wrote to Joel R. Poinsett, former diplomatic representative in Buenos Aires and Chile, asking him to act as an agent of the United States in gathering information from the governments along the east coast of South America.⁵ However, in spite of urging of friends to accept the mission, Poinsett declined.⁶ The administration then turned to the idea of a commission of two or three members. A Mr. Jones was offered an appointment as a commissioner but, after considerable hesitation, he refused.⁷ By July 18, two commissioners, Caesar Augustus Rodney and John Graham, had accepted appointments,⁸ and, on July 19, Henry M. Brackenridge accepted an appointment as secretary to the Commission.⁹ Shortly before the Commission sailed, Theodorick Bland was appointed as a third member. Captain Arthur Sinclair was in command of the United States frigate *Congress*, which was to transport the Commission. On October 30, William Baldwin accepted an offer from the Secretary of the Navy to accompany the mission as ship's surgeon.¹⁰

Caesar Augustus Rodney was the most prominent member of the Commission. He was born in

Dover, Delaware, on January 4, 1772. After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania, he practiced law and entered politics in his native state. In 1796, he was elected to the Delaware House of Representatives and, in 1802, to the United States Congress. Rodney served as Attorney General of the United States from 1807 to 1811 and in the army from 1813 to 1815. In 1815 he was elected to the Delaware State Senate, a position which he held at the time of his appointment as a member of the South American Commission.¹¹

John Graham, born in Dumfries, Virginia, in 1774 and a graduate of Columbia College in 1790, was the only member of the Commission with previous diplomatic experience. He had been attached to the American Embassy in Madrid from 1801 to 1803. In 1804 he was appointed secretary of the Territory of Orleans and was later Jefferson's confidential agent investigating Burr's activities in the West. From 1807 to 1817, Graham was chief clerk of the State Department.¹²

The last of the commissioners to be appointed, Theodorick Bland, was born in Dinwiddie County, Virginia, December 6, 1776.¹³ As a young man, Bland practiced law in the back-woods areas of Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky, but, becoming dissatisfied with life on the frontier, he settled in Baltimore about 1800. In 1809 he was elected a member of the Maryland House of Delegates and in 1812 was appointed associate judge of Maryland's Sixth Judicial District.¹⁴ The reason for Bland's appointment to the Commission is obscure. However, he had close connections with a group of able men in Baltimore who were carrying on active propaganda in behalf of the South American revolutionists.¹⁵ Among these men were David Porter, a naval officer with a close sympathy for the Carrera faction in Chile, Henry Marie Brackenridge, who strongly endorsed Bland shortly after Brackenridge's appointment as secretary to the

⁴ Stewart, *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 9: 37 (Feb. 1929). Stewart assigns the need of an excuse for delay on the part of the administration in adopting a new policy with respect to the revolutionists as an important reason, but Whitaker, *United States and Latin America*, 241-242, disagrees with this view.

⁵ Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence*, 1: 39-40.

⁶ J. F. Rippey, *Joel R. Poinsett, Versatile American* (Durham, N. C., 1935), 66.

⁷ Richard Rush to John Graham, Aug. 22, 1817. Despatches to Consuls, v. 2, State Department Archives, National Archives.

⁸ Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence*, 1: 42-45.

⁹ H. M. Brackenridge to Richard Rush, July 19, 1817. South American Missions: C. A. Rodney, John Graham, Theodore [sic] Bland, 1815-1818, v. 1, State Department Archives, National Archives. Hereafter cited as South American Missions.

¹⁰ William Baldwin Manuscripts, Journal, Oct. 30, 1817, New York Botanical Garden Library. Cited below as Baldwin Journal.

¹¹ G. H. Ryden, "Rodney, Caesar Augustus," *Dictionary of American Biography*, v. 16 (1935).

¹² A. C. Gordon, Jr., "Graham, John," *Dictionary of American Biography*, v. 7 (1931).

¹³ Bland to John S. Skinner, May 4, 1830. Theodorick Bland Manuscripts, Maryland Historical Society. Hereafter cited as Bland Manuscripts.

¹⁴ Sketch and Genealogy of Theodorick Bland, Fifth Chancellor of the State of Maryland, by H. J. Berkeley. *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Whitaker, *United States and Latin America*, 162-164, 240.

Commission,¹⁶ and John S. Skinner, who had married Bland's stepdaughter.¹⁷ On the Commission's return, it was rumored that Bland had been connected with Skinner in South American privateering¹⁸ and had actually gone to Chile on that business.¹⁹ Brackenridge, who quarreled with Bland during the trip, told John Quincy Adams later that Bland had secured the appointment through the influence of Skinner and his friends in order to collect money that Skinner had loaned the Carreras.²⁰ Bland did try to collect this money for Skinner,²¹ but whatever the reason for his appointment, his connection with Skinner is of interest to us in that Skinner later distributed seed wheat brought by Bland from Chile and also publicized Bland's observations on Chilean agriculture through *The American Farmer*.²²

The secretary to the Commission, Henry Marie Brackenridge, was born in Pittsburgh in 1786 and was educated as a lawyer. He moved to Baltimore in 1807 but spent the years from 1810 to 1814 in Missouri and Louisiana.²³ A series of his letters from Louisiana, written during the War of 1812,

attracted the attention of Madison, who suggested the possibility of giving Brackenridge a diplomatic appointment. Brackenridge went to Washington but the expected appointment did not materialize immediately. He returned to Baltimore, where he practiced law, wrote books and pamphlets, and was elected a member of the Maryland legislature.²⁴ In October 1817 Brackenridge published a pamphlet entitled *South America: A Letter on the Present State of that Country*, addressed to James Monroe, which is considered one of the best of the volumes on the subject to appear in that period.²⁵

William Baldwin, ship's surgeon and the person whose activities are to be most closely followed in this account, was born March 29, 1779, in Chester County, Pennsylvania. His first gainful occupation was teaching school, but after a few years he began the study of medicine under the direction of a local physician. Baldwin attended the University of Pennsylvania from 1802 to 1803 but lack of money forced him to return to assisting and studying under the physician with whom he had begun his medical work. During this period he began botanical work with Dr. Moses Marshall, an experienced botanist, and also received encouragement from Benjamin Smith Barton of Philadelphia. In 1805 he secured an appointment as surgeon to a merchant ship sailing for Canton by way of Antwerp and, with the funds obtained from this job, was able to return to the University of Pennsylvania, which awarded him the degree of Doctor of Medicine in 1807. Baldwin began the practice of medicine in Wilmington, Delaware, and there married. In his leisure time he collected plants and engaged in correspondence and in the exchange of botanical specimens with Henry Muhlenberg, a well-known botanist of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Baldwin moved to Georgia in 1811 because of his frail health. Here he did much botanical exploration and collecting and supplied valuable materials to Stephen Elliott, the author of the early, valuable *Sketch of the Botany of South Carolina and Georgia*. In 1812 Baldwin was commissioned as a surgeon in the navy and was stationed for some years at St. Mary's and Savannah, Georgia. In 1816 Baldwin sent his family to Wilmington, Delaware, while he undertook a botanical exploration of East Florida that lasted for several

¹⁶ H. M. Brackenridge to Richard Rush, July 28, 1817. *South American Missions*, v. 1.

¹⁷ B. P. Poore, "Biographical Notice of John S. Skinner," *The Plough, the Loom and the Anvil*, 7: 2 (July 1854). The article was reprinted by John L. O'Connor (New York, 1924).

¹⁸ American interest in privateering was extensive during this period. See A. C. Wilgus, "Some Notes on Spanish American Patriot Activity along the Atlantic Seaboard, 1816-1822," *North Carolina Historical Review*, 4: 172-181 (Apr. 1927); and C. C. Griffin, "Privateering from Baltimore during the Spanish American Wars of Independence," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 35: 1-25 (Mar. 1940).

¹⁹ C. A. Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848* (Philadelphia, 1874-1877), 4: 159.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 5: 56-57.

²¹ Bland petitioned the Buenos Aires government for payment on Apr. 4, 1818 (S. F. Bemis, "Early Diplomatic Missions from Buenos Aires to the United States, 1811-1824," *American Antiquarian Society, Proceedings*, 36 [1940]). Bland personally presented the claim to the Chilean government on May 25 and 27, 1818, and subsequently drew up papers regarding the claim after being assured that it would be paid. Bland Manuscripts, Notes on Chile, 1818.

²² John S. Skinner was postmaster at Baltimore from 1816 to 1837 and a leading figure in political and intellectual life in that city.

²³ C. M. Newlin, "Brackenridge, Henry Marie," *Dictionary of American Biography*, v. 2 (1929).

²⁴ H. M. Brackenridge, *Recollections of Persons and Places in the West* (2 ed., Philadelphia, 1868), 280-284.

²⁵ Whitaker, *United States and Latin America*, 162, 178-181.

months.²⁶ He returned to Wilmington in June, 1817 and began to prepare a series of his Florida letters and sketches for publication, a project which was never completed. In August Baldwin was offered the opportunity by the navy to sail as surgeon on the ship *John Adams*, scheduled to cruise in the Gulf of Mexico. He accepted but withdrew when he found that the ship would not sail for some months and that the cruise would last for 18 months or two years.²⁷

In October Baldwin went to Washington to discuss the possibility of sailing on the *Congress* with the South American Commission, probably having heard of the expedition from C. A. Rodney, with whom he was acquainted. Baldwin was gratified to find that his reputation as a botanist was known in the Navy Department and he was assured that his knowledge of natural history was the determining factor in selecting him for the post.²⁸ He also found that the Columbian Institute²⁹ was interested in having a scientist accompany the Commission, and in fact, Dr. Henry Hunt, acting for the Institute, subsequently presented Baldwin with a letter through John Graham asking Baldwin to give his attention to various scientific objects in South America. Baldwin was formally offered the position on October 30 and he accepted.³⁰

Perhaps if the sailing of the Commission had not been delayed for various reasons, neither Bland nor Baldwin would have had the opportunity to accompany it. The most important delay after the appointment of Rodney and Graham occurred with the serious illness and death of one of Rodney's sons. At the same time, Adams suggested to Graham that the resulting delay in the departure

of the Commission might prove useful to the administration.³¹ As late as October 30, President Monroe questioned his Cabinet as to the course to be followed in relation to marauding parties at Amelia Island and Galveston. Upon the decision to break them up, it was definitely decided to send the commissioners to Buenos Aires.³² The original instructions to Rodney and Graham had limited the Commission's travels to Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and Rio de Janeiro. After Bland was appointed, he suggested to President Monroe that the commissioners, or at least one of them, be authorized to visit Chile.³³ A provision to this effect was included in the supplementary instructions from Secretary of State John Quincy Adams dated November 21, 1817.³⁴

The mission finally sailed on December 4, 1817.³⁵ The private secretary of Rodney, William T. Reed, and one of Rodney's sons, Thomas Rodney, accompanied the mission.³⁶ Baldwin was pleased by the quality of companionship he found on the voyage: the naval officers were an outstanding group, Brackenridge was interesting and amusing, and Bland impressed Baldwin when he stated that he planned to lay aside law for chemistry and botany.³⁷

The *Congress* arrived at Rio de Janeiro on January 29, 1818, and Baldwin immediately began to collect plants and make excursions in the vicinity of the city. His most extensive and interesting excursion was made on February 2, in company with Brackenridge and Reed. The group ascended the mountain called the "Parrot's Head" as far as the beginning of the aqueduct which supplied Rio de Janeiro with water and then followed the aqueduct back to the city, arriving there loaded

²⁶ William Darlington, *Reliquiae Baldwinianae: Selections from the Correspondence of the Late William Baldwin, M.D., Surgeon in the U. S. Navy; with Occasional Notes and a Short Biographical Memoir* (Philadelphia, 1843), 7-13.

²⁷ Baldwin to William Darlington, Aug. 20 and 28, 1817, in *ibid.*, 237-241.

²⁸ Baldwin to Darlington, Oct. 30, 1817, in *ibid.*, 244-246.

²⁹ The Columbian Institute for the Promotion of Arts and Sciences was the first learned society established in Washington. Its history has been written by Richard Rathbun, *Columbian Institute for the Promotion of Arts and Sciences; A Washington Society of 1816-1838, which Established a Museum and Botanic Garden under Government Patronage*, Smithsonian Institution, *United States National Museum Bulletin* 101 (Washington, 1917).

³⁰ Baldwin Journal, Oct. 30 and Dec. 6, 1817.

³¹ John Graham to Richard Rush, Aug. 11, 1817, C. A. Rodney to Richard Rush, Aug. 21, 1817. *South American Missions*, v. 1.

³² Adams, *Memoirs*, 4: 14-15.

³³ Bland to James Monroe, Nov. 15, 1817. Bland Manuscripts. The original of this letter is in the Library of Congress, James Monroe Manuscripts, Writings to, 16: 2097.

³⁴ Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence*, 1: 47-49.

³⁵ C. A. Rodney, John Graham and Theodorick Bland to John Quincy Adams, Dec. 4, 1817. *South American Missions*, v. 1.

³⁶ H. M. Brackenridge, *Voyage to South America Performed by Order of the American Government, in the Years 1817 and 1818, in the Frigate Congress* (Baltimore, 1819), 1: 79.

³⁷ Baldwin to Darlington, Nov. 30 and Dec. 3, 1817, in Darlington, *Reliquiae Baldwinianae*, 248-252.

with plants.³⁸ His other collecting trips, including one on the fourth with Rodney, were shorter.³⁹

Baldwin was impressed by the picturesque site of Rio de Janeiro, the size and wealth of the city, and the mountains with their varied types of vegetation. The Commission happened to be in Rio de Janeiro during the period of celebration climaxed by the crowning of the former Prince Regent John as King of Portugal, Algarve and the Brazils. The emphasis upon royalty and the prominent part of the Roman Catholic Church in the ceremonies repelled the Protestant, republican Baldwin. He found little to attract him in the government, the people, or, for that matter, the climate.⁴⁰ His lack of energy, due to his indisposition, combined with the heat and the humidity, made it difficult for him to dry his plant specimens without spoilage.⁴¹

The *Congress* left Rio de Janeiro on February 9, 1818, after being detained a day for want of a wind. Unfortunately, the friendly feelings that had prevailed among the members of the Commission and the officers were marred about this time by a series of petty quarrels and misunderstandings, the most serious of which was between Bland and Brackenridge.⁴² Two years later, Brackenridge told John Quincy Adams that the difficulty arose when he and Rodney taxed Bland with allowing his connections with Skinner, and a desire to recover the money Skinner had loaned José Miguel Carrera, to influence his conduct and decisions as a commissioner. Bland, according to Brackenridge, passed off Rodney's comments because Rodney was a commissioner but remained very bitter toward Brackenridge.⁴³ Baldwin supported Brackenridge and also got involved in other quarrels which, since he was sensitive and subject to worry, appear to have interfered with his plant collecting on the River Plate.⁴⁴

³⁸ Brackenridge, *Voyage to South America*, 1: 134-140.

³⁹ Baldwin Journal, Jan. 29 to Feb. 6, 1818. Brackenridge makes the interesting point that at this time there were no fewer than 14 European scientists pursuing investigations in Brazil and that this number included Auguste de Saint-Hilaire, J. B. von Spix, and C. F. P. von Martius (Brackenridge, *Voyage to South America*, 1: 155).

⁴⁰ Baldwin to Stephen Elliott, Feb. 7, 1818. William Baldwin Manuscripts, New York Botanical Garden Library. Hereafter cited as Baldwin Manuscripts.

⁴¹ Baldwin Journal, Feb. 6, 1818.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Feb. 9 to Feb. 19, 1818.

⁴³ Adams, *Memoirs*, 4: 119 and 5: 56-57.

⁴⁴ This statement is supported by several entries in

The *Congress* reached the Río de la Plata on February 19, and on the following day Baldwin explored and collected plants on the small, uninhabited island of Flores. From February 21 to 26 the *Congress* was anchored off Montevideo. Baldwin went ashore on the 23rd and, on an excursion outside the city, obtained several plants that were new to him. On the 25th Bland introduced Baldwin to José Miguel Carrera, then in exile from Chile and residing in Montevideo. In Baldwin's opinion, Carrera had probably erred in not joining O'Higgins, and Baldwin contrasted Carrera's career with that of San Martín.⁴⁵

The commissioners, Captain Sinclair, Baldwin, and a few others sailed on February 26 in a small brig for Buenos Aires, Captain Sinclair having concluded that difficulties in navigation made it unsafe to move the *Congress* to that city. The brig arrived on the 28th and Baldwin and Brackenridge took lodgings in the city.⁴⁶ On the following day in company with a gentleman with whom Brackenridge had become acquainted they walked up the river in an attempt to reach open country where Baldwin could collect specimens. Although they walked about two miles beyond the town, they found no open ground. Instead, they were surrounded on all sides by "quintas," fenced plots of a few acres occupied by the owner's dwelling, fruit trees, and vegetable and flower gardens. Brackenridge's friend met, by chance, one of the owners of a quinta with whom he was acquainted, and Baldwin examined the methods of cultivation and the plants cultivated on that particular plot.⁴⁷

Although Baldwin made several collecting trips around Buenos Aires, he gained most pleasure (and profit, in a botanical sense) from his acquaintance with Aimé Bonpland, Alexander von Humboldt's collaborator from 1799 to 1804 in the botanical and geographical exploration of northern South America, Central America, and some of the Caribbean Islands.⁴⁸ Baldwin met Bonpland on

Baldwin's Journal for the period. For examples see Baldwin Journal, Mar. 21, Apr. 11, and Apr. 25, 1818.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Feb. 20-Feb. 26, 1818.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Feb. 26-Feb. 28, 1818.

⁴⁷ Brackenridge, *Voyage to South America*, 1: 297-299.

⁴⁸ Bonpland was born in France, Aug. 29, 1773. He won a place in history by traveling with Alexander von Humboldt in America from 1799 to 1804 and subsequently assisting Humboldt in writing the monumental accounts embodying the results of the investigations. Bonpland left France in 1816 after losing his job as a

March 4 through a Mr. Atkins, who lived a mile and a half down the river from Buenos Aires. Baldwin spent March 6th at Bonpland's and on the 14th, Bonpland repaid the visit.⁴⁰ Rodney, Brackenridge, and perhaps some of the others, also met Bonpland.

Baldwin was able to discuss his new plants with Bonpland and could compare his specimens with the plants in Bonpland's herbarium. Bonpland confirmed the fact that several of Baldwin's plants were of new genera and many more were new species.⁴⁰ But the conversations of the two botanists were not confined to discussing herbarium specimens. They discussed, for example, the lack of trees on the *llanos*, and agreed that trees could probably be planted with success.⁴¹ Baldwin learned that peach trees were of great importance in the area. They bore fruit in three years and then were cut for firewood. Lombardy poplars were also becoming important.

Agriculture, too, received its share of attention. Baldwin learned from Bonpland that no iron ploughs were in use, that the ground was very soft, and that irrigation was not necessary.⁴² Bonpland was occupied in planning a large garden. He had brought many plants and seeds from France and he intended to introduce everything from Europe that would be likely to be a source of profit to himself and a benefit to his adopted country.⁴³ Baldwin and Rodney promised to send Bonpland seeds of the sea-island cotton, grown mainly in Georgia, and Rodney later did so.⁴⁴ Baldwin and Bonpland

parted with an agreement to continue their acquaintance by correspondence and to exchange botanical specimens. Shortly before the *Congress* left the Río de la Plata, Bonpland sent Baldwin a large collection of plants.⁴⁵

On March 15 Baldwin left Buenos Aires for the *Congress*. He planned to return to shore to continue collecting but, after an altercation with Captain Sinclair, who could see no practical use in "botanizing," was unable to carry out his plans. During April the *Congress* was off Maldonado and Montevideo. Baldwin made interesting collections in both places. Among other plants, Baldwin believed that he had discovered the common potato (*Solanum tuberosum*) in an indigenous state at several sites near Montevideo and Maldonado.⁴⁶ He was assisted in his collecting by some of the ship's officers, who brought him specimens of any plants they considered unusual or interesting. He also collected the roots of several flowering plants. While the ship was off Montevideo, Carrera dined on board and Brackenridge and Baldwin spent some time with him in the city assisting in the preparation of an account of Carrera's misfortunes. Carrera supplied Baldwin with cuttings of the Muscatel and other fine grapes.⁴⁷

Rodney and Graham rejoined the ship at the end of April having spent the entire time in Buenos Aires collecting material for their reports. On May 4 the ship left Maldonado and arrived at Salvador, Brazil, on May 28. Baldwin did considerable collecting in the vicinity of the city and found the plant life along the shores of a nearby lake particularly interesting. After leaving Salvador on June 5, the next stop was on June 23 at the little island of Margarita, off the coast of Venezuela. Baldwin collected on the 23rd and 24th. The ship left Margarita on the 25th and arrived at Norfolk, Virginia, on July 8, 1818.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, Theodorick Bland had not returned with the other commissioners. The supplementary instructions to the Commission, dated November

result of Napoleon's overthrow and went to Argentina. He occupied the chair of internal pathology in the medical faculty of the University of Buenos Aires for several years and then moved to Corrientes. The forces of Dictator Francia of Paraguay took him into custody on December 3, 1821, and he was held captive until February 2, 1830. The French Government offered to repatriate him and his family, but Bonpland refused the offer. He remained until his death in 1858. E. Autran, "Important trouvaille, manuscrits de Bonpland; correspondance inedite de Humboldt," *Le Courrier de La Plata le Français* (Buenos Aires), Oct. 2, 1905.

⁴⁰ Baldwin Journal, Mar. 4, 6, and 14, 1818.

⁴¹ Baldwin to Darlington, May 30, 1818, in Darlington, *Reliquiae Baldwinianae*, 271.

⁴² Brackenridge, *Voyage to South America*, 1:95.

⁴³ Baldwin Journal, Mar. 4, 1818.

⁴⁴ Baldwin to Elliott, Aug. 7, 1818. Baldwin Manuscripts.

⁴⁵ "Bonpland's Useful Exertions in the Region

Watered by the River la Plata," *American Farmer*, 2: 176 (Aug. 25, 1820).

⁴⁶ Baldwin Journal, Apr. 26, 1818. Baldwin subsequently sent Bonpland 138 specimens of North American plants (Baldwin to Darlington, Oct. 9, 1818, in Darlington, *Reliquiae Baldwinianae*, 286).

⁴⁷ Baldwin to Elliott, July 7, 1818. Baldwin Manuscripts.

⁴⁸ Baldwin Journal, Mar. 15-Apr. 30, 1818.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, May 4-July 8, 1818.

21, 1817, had provided for one or more of the commissioners to go overland to Chile if circumstances indicated that step should be taken.⁵⁹ Although Rodney had at first protested the journey as unnecessary,⁶⁰ Bland made the trip.⁶¹ He left Buenos Aires on April 15 and on the 26th arrived at Mendoza, the western Argentine city which served as the point of departure for travelers crossing the Andes to Chile by way of the Uspallata Pass. The journey was resumed on the 29th and on May 5 Bland arrived in Santiago. This trip gave Bland an appreciation of the geography and physical resources of Argentina and Chile that was reflected in his letters and report. He was much impressed by the agriculture of the Central Valley of Chile and came to the conclusion that Chile would become a great producer of agricultural products for the world market.⁶² Bland left Santiago on July 10 and on July 15 left Valparaiso for the United States.⁶³ He arrived in Philadelphia on October 29.⁶⁴

President Monroe had expected that the three commissioners would prepare a joint report of their findings, and he was displeased when he found that they were in such strong disagreement that they were submitting three different statements.⁶⁵ The three reports, along with one written by Joel R. Poinsett at the request of the administration, were submitted in November.⁶⁶ The commissioners' disagreements were aptly summarized by John Quincy Adams: "Rodney's report is that of an enthusiastic partisan of the South American cause . . . and an apologetic eulogium upon the

present Government of Buenos Ayres. Graham admires them much less, and Bland holds them in abhorrence and contempt."⁶⁷ Poinsett, like Graham, was opposed to the immediate recognition of the government at Buenos Aires.⁶⁸

The reports, with the exception of Bland's, were given over almost exclusively to political, military, and commercial matters. Bland's reports were longer and contained much on geography and some comments on agriculture. The Argentine pampas seemed to Bland one of the most expanded and awful solitudes on earth. Even the water was brackish: generally bad and in some places worse. The lack of trees impressed him; he found on inquiry that the only trees that would grow were the "embudo" (the ombu), worthless as wood, and the peach, olive, and fig. The grain grown was generally good but the crops frequently failed. Cattle supplied the wealth of the pampas. In contrast, Bland considered Entre Ríos and Paraguay the most promising sections for agricultural development. These areas were hilly, well watered, and covered with forests.⁶⁹ Such a comparison so unfavorable to the pampas was but natural when we remember that many people in the United States at that time regarded the prairies with a similar lack of enthusiasm.

While Bland saw some agricultural possibilities in Argentina, his enthusiasm was reserved for the Central Valley of Chile, "a land flowing with corn, wine, and oil."⁷⁰ Wheat, barley, grapes, hemp, figs, olives, cattle, mules—all were produced abundantly and in excellent quality. Chile was destined to be the great granary of all the countries of the continent fronting on the Pacific and the South Atlantic.⁷¹

The commissioners, Brackenridge, and Baldwin published many letters about the mission in the newspapers of the day.⁷² Many of these gained wide circulation since they were usually reprinted several times. Generally, the letters were descriptive or political and contained little that did not appear in the commissioners' reports or Brackenridge's book.

⁵⁹ Adams, *Memoirs*, 4: 159.

⁶⁰ Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence*, 1: 439-443.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 1: 400-405.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 2: 960.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 2: 960-962, 998-1000.

⁷² The issues of *Niles' Weekly Register* from May to November 1818 contain nine such letters.

⁵⁹ Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence*, 1: 47-49.

⁶⁰ Adams, *Memoirs*, 4: 159.

⁶¹ Theodorick Bland to John Quincy Adams, Apr. 15, 1818. South American Missions, v. 1.

⁶² Notes on Chile, 1818. Bland Manuscripts.

⁶³ The fullest account of Bland's activities in Chile is found in E. Pereira Salas, *La Misión Bland en Chile*.

⁶⁴ Notes on Chile, 1818. Bland Manuscripts.

⁶⁵ Adams, *Memoirs*, 4: 155-156.

⁶⁶ The texts of the reports, without certain statistical and documentary appendices, are printed in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence*, 1: 382-515, 2: 946-1019. The same texts and the appendices are also found in *American State Papers, Foreign Relations* (Washington, 1834), 4: 219-348. The original reports and appendices are in South American Missions, v. 1. The reports were published serially in several newspapers of the period and were also reprinted in England.

Baldwin published neither an official report nor a book regarding the mission, but he did publish letters in newspapers. He had gone on the mission prejudiced against the Spanish character and with the belief that a Spaniard in South America was "much like a Spaniard every where else." However, he changed his opinions regarding the fitness of the South Americans for independence and, in his letters to friends and to the newspapers, strongly urged that the United States lead the way in recognizing the independence of Buenos Aires and, ultimately, of the other Spanish-American nations.⁷³ Some of Baldwin's published letters also described the flora of the regions visited and may have aroused some public interest in the subject.⁷⁴ Brackenridge encouraged Baldwin to publish his letters and urged him to publish not only the natural but political history of the regions visited.⁷⁵

In 1819, Brackenridge published a two-volume work entitled *Voyage to South America*.⁷⁶ Brackenridge was a skillful and engaging writer and he presented an able plea for recognition of the Buenos Aires government.⁷⁷ The book contains several references to Brazilian and Argentine agriculture but these references are incidental.

Baldwin was pleased with the excellent state of preservation of his South American plants; after early difficulties on the mission, he had devised a

new plan for drying specimens.⁷⁸ For some months after his return, Baldwin worked at classifying his South American plants and at preparing descriptions of these and the many undescribed North American plants that he had collected over the course of years. By February 1819, he had completed a rather long work, and he consulted Zaccheus Collins, an eminent botanist of Philadelphia, for suggestions on publication. Collins suggested that the work was too long for publication in a periodical and that Baldwin had more to gain by publishing it independently; that the South and North American plants should be separated; and that Baldwin prepare a communication of moderate length for publication in the *Transactions* of the American Philosophical Society.⁷⁹ Baldwin submitted an account of two species of *Cyperus* from Georgia and four species of *Kyllingia* from South America to the American Philosophical Society in March. The paper was read before the Society on April 16, 1819, and appeared in a volume of the Society's *Transactions* published in 1825.⁸⁰ Although this was the only paper on Baldwin's South American plants published, his notes and memoranda were very useful to contemporary botanical workers.⁸¹

Baldwin had stated before his death that he wished Darlington to have such portions of his herbarium as Darlington might desire, but Darlington declined in order that the herbarium might be sold for the benefit of Baldwin's family. The herbarium was sold to Collins, whose representatives in turn sold it to Schweinitz, another leader in early American botany. Schweinitz bequeathed

⁷³ Baldwin to Darlington, Mar. 11, 1818, in Darlington, *Reliquiae Baldwinianae*, 265-269. Baldwin sent a copy of this letter to the *Delaware Watchman*, Wilmington.

⁷⁴ For example: *Niles' Weekly Register*, 14: 210-211 (May 23, 1818).

⁷⁵ Baldwin Journal, June 5 and July 11, 1818.

⁷⁶ *Voyage to South America* was also published in London in 1820.

⁷⁷ A bitter attack on Brackenridge's book, *Strictures on a Voyage to South America, as Indited by the Secretary to the Late Mission to La Plata*, was published anonymously in Baltimore in 1820. The volume adopts the viewpoint of the Buenos Aires political leaders who had been exiled by Director Pueyrredón in 1816. It was probably written by Bland, John S. Skinner or Baptis Irvine. One authority, E. Pereira Salas, *La Misión Bland en Chile*, 28, advances evidence that Irvine was the author, although Brackenridge was convinced that Bland had at least assisted in its preparation (Adams, *Memoirs*, 5: 56-57). The Bland papers do not resolve this problem. However, at the time of his death, Bland had three copies of the *Strictures* in his library. List of Books in Chancellor Bland's Library. Bland Manuscripts.

⁷⁸ Baldwin to Darlington, July 23, 1818, in Darlington, *Reliquiae Baldwinianae*, 275.

⁷⁹ Baldwin to Darlington, Feb. 4, 1819, *ibid.*, 299-300.

⁸⁰ William Baldwin, "An Account of Two North American Species of *Cyperus*, Discovered in the State of Georgia: to which is added Four Species of *Kyllingia* Found on the Brazilian Coast, and on the Rio de la Plata in South America," *American Philosophical Society, Transactions* (n. s.), 2: 167-171.

⁸¹ J. H. Barnhart, "Some American Botanists of Former Days," *Journal of the New York Botanical Garden*, 10: 183 (Aug. 1909). These notes and memoranda, after Baldwin's death, were sent to John Torrey, the outstanding botanist of the day. They were eventually transferred with Dr. Torrey's correspondence to the Library of the New York Botanical Garden.

⁸² Darlington, *Reliquiae Baldwinianae*, 322.

the herbarium to the Academy of Natural Sciences at Philadelphia.⁸²

Baldwin collected roots, probably of flowering plants, in the River Plate area.⁸³ On July 22, 1818, he set out some of these roots in the garden of his home in Wilmington.⁸⁴ Shortly afterwards, Baldwin arranged with Robert Carr, who was managing Bartram's garden, the first botanical garden in America, to cultivate his South American plants.⁸⁵

Bland had been much impressed by the wheat he had seen growing in Chile and brought some of it to the United States. The wheat was very white and somewhat shorter, rounder, and fuller in the grain than the wheat usually grown in the United States.⁸⁶ This description indicates that the wheat was a variety of club wheat, some types of which were imported from Chile into California and Oregon during the period from 1850 to 1870.⁸⁷ Bland gave this seed to John S. Skinner for distribution, and Skinner gave small quantities to other friends. The seed was distributed in the late fall of 1818 and after the growing season of 1819, by which time Skinner had established his periodical, the *American Farmer*, Skinner asked his friends to report the results of their experiments with the seeds.⁸⁸ Several of these reports were subsequently printed in the *American Farmer*. Generally, the wheat was neither as large nor as white as the original seed, and one experimenter found that it was more subject to rust than other wheats.⁸⁹

One of the most extensive experiments reported was carried out by David Porter at his farm on Meridian Hill, in the District of Columbia. Porter had sown a small wine glass of the Chilean seed and obtained a yield of seven quarts of grain. The next year he obtained 25 bushels, much of which he had ground into flour. He considered this flour the best that had been in his family since he had been in the District. In the fall of 1821, Porter

undertook to give a quart of the seed to anyone who wished to make a trial of it. The advantages it had over common wheat, according to Porter, were greater productiveness and less liability to shatter out in the field.⁹⁰

The farm on Meridian Hill has long since disappeared, and club wheat, too, has gone from eastern fields. It has been replaced by wheat more suited to the climatic conditions of the eastern United States. Club wheat is now grown mainly in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, California, and some of the other western states.⁹¹

The three commissioners, Brackenridge, and Baldwin were all given new positions of trust by the administration after the return of the mission. Unfortunately, three of these men, Baldwin, Graham, and Rodney, died shortly after receiving their appointments. Only the arch rivals, Bland and Brackenridge, lived their allotted span of three-score years and ten.

Baldwin was appointed surgeon and botanist of the expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains made in 1819-1820 and commanded by Major Stephen H. Long. Baldwin joined the explorers at Pittsburgh, April 1, 1819. The expedition traveled by steamboat down the Ohio and up the Missouri. Baldwin used every opportunity to collect plants and make notes on the vegetation. However, his health became progressively worse, and he died at Franklin, Missouri, on September 1, 1819.⁹²

Graham, the diplomat of the group, was appointed Minister to Portugal to reside in Brazil, on April 27, 1819. It was the hope of the administration that his "amenity of deportment" and "prudence" would restore "good understanding" with the Portuguese Government.⁹³ Unfortunately, Graham found the Brazilian climate too severe, and he returned to Washington where he died in 1820.⁹⁴

Rodney was elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1820 and to the United

⁸² None of the Baldwin papers further identify these plants.

⁸³ Baldwin Journal, July 22, 1818.

⁸⁴ Baldwin to Darlington, Aug. 14, 1818, in Darlington, *Reliquiae Baldwinianae*, 277.

⁸⁵ "Wheat from Chili," *Niles' Weekly Register*, 15: 200 (Nov. 14, 1818).

⁸⁶ J. A. Clark and B. B. Bayles, *Varieties of Club Wheat*, U. S. Department of Agriculture, *Farmers' Bulletin* 1708 (Washington, 1933), 1-3.

⁸⁷ "Chile Wheat," *American Farmer*, 1: 143 (July 30, 1819).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1: 193-194 (Sep. 17, 1819).

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 3: 271 (Nov. 16, 1821).

⁹⁰ J. A. Clark and B. B. Bayles, *Classification of Wheat Varieties Grown in the United States*, U. S. Department of Agriculture, *Technical Bulletin* 459 (Washington, 1935), 128-132.

⁹¹ Baldwin Journal; Darlington, *Reliquiae Baldwinianae*, 311-323.

⁹² Adams, *Memoirs*, 4: 353.

⁹³ Gordon, "Graham, John," *Dictionary of American Biography*, v. 7 (1931).

States Senate in 1822. In 1823, he resigned from the Senate to accept an appointment by Monroe as first United States Minister Plenipotentiary to the Argentine Republic. He became ill shortly after his arrival in Buenos Aires and died there June 10, 1824.⁶⁵

Bland and Brackenridge returned to Baltimore, and in 1819 they became the leading candidates for appointment as Judge of the Maryland District Court. Although the stories that he was implicated in privateering in Baltimore were brought to the attention of the administration, President Monroe gave the appointment to Bland.⁶⁶ A few years later, on August 18, 1824, he became Chancellor of the State of Maryland, a position which he held until his death in 1846.⁶⁷

Brackenridge was appointed secretary and translator to Andrew Jackson, then Governor of

Florida, in 1821, and later became judge of a Federal court in Florida. He was removed from office by Jackson in 1832 and returned to Pennsylvania. He was a member of Congress from 1840 to 1841 and a member of a commission established by the Mexican treaty of April 11, 1839. Brackenridge was an able and prolific writer of books, pamphlets, and articles, most of which dealt with the frontier areas and political questions. He died on January 18, 1871.⁶⁸

An important result of the mission so far as its diplomatic and political aspects were concerned was the increased interest aroused in the public mind regarding South America and its struggle for independence. The scientific results, at least in the long run, were more important. Baldwin's collection of plant specimens was available for study in the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, his notes were of assistance to contemporary botanists, and his work aroused scientific interest in South American plants. Although the club wheat imported by Bland did not become a permanent crop in the eastern United States, it assisted in awakening interest in importing improved varieties of plants, an interest that was eventually to mean much to American agriculture.

⁶⁵ Ryden, "Rodney, Caesar Augustus," *ibid.*, v. 16 (1935).

⁶⁶ Adams, *Memoirs*, 4: 408, 413-415, 417, 436, 445. Bland was appointed Judge of the District Court in and for the District of Maryland on Nov. 23, 1819. This appointment was valid until the end of the next session of the United States Senate, and, after Bland was confirmed by the Senate, a new commission, dated Jan. 5, 1820, was issued him. Both of these commissions are in Bland Manuscripts.

⁶⁷ Bland Manuscripts.

⁶⁸ Newlin, "Brackenridge, Henry Marie," *Dictionary of American Biography*, v. 2 (1929).

THE AGRICULTURE OF OXFORDSHIRE AT THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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Oxfordshire lies athwart the scarplands of southern England, reaching northwards almost into the vale of the Stratford Avon and southwards well into the London basin. This position, across a succession of geological formations from the Lower Lias to the Tertiaries, results in a diversity of soils, relief and drainage and thus of agricultural potentialities. At the same time its situation, far from coalfields and the growing manufacturing towns, ensured that the county long remained untouched by the effects of the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century. Improvements in communications, however,

especially the growth of the turnpike road and inland navigation systems, caused it to be increasingly affected by the new industrial developments. The influence of the latter was not entirely beneficial. Competition from cheap factory-made goods caused many local manufactures, such as the Witney woollen, Banbury plush and Woodstock steel and leather trades, to suffer a serious decline, from which some of them never recovered.

Agriculture, on the contrary, prospered as a result of the increasing demand for foodstuffs for the growing industrial population. Nevertheless, Oxfordshire farming methods remained back-

ward, as did those of adjoining counties in the southeast midlands. In the year 1800, out of a total area of approximately 475,000 acres, 115,000 acres, or nearly a quarter, remained as open-field arable or waste. But enclosing was proceeding apace and no year passed without some parish seeking Parliamentary sanction to divide and enclose its open fields. Indeed, the whole interest of the county's agriculture at this period lies in the glimpse it affords of the countryside in the throes of a rapid and radical transformation. Old ideas and methods existed side by side with the new; the "Goths and Vandals of the open fields" beside the "civilization of enclosures."¹ The wasteful, because by that date avoidable, practice of fallowing was common in the open townships, but rigid adherence to the old open-field system was rare and few parishes cultivated their fields in a strictly two- or three-field manner. In many of them longer and more profitable rotations based on the Norfolk husbandry—roots, barley, clover, wheat—had been adopted, and the arable was divided into six, eight or even more fields. At Kirtlington, for example, twelve arable divisions replaced the two original fields, whose names alone survived. Even the townships which retained three fields intact sometimes introduced a catch crop, or "hitching," of roots, vetches or clover on part of the fallow field.

Enclosure did not necessarily, or at once, lead to improved husbandry, for some farmers clung stubbornly to methods hallowed by tradition; but, on balance, it resulted in better farming and higher yields. In 1807 Arthur Young observed:

The improvements which have taken place in thirty years are prodigious, especially from enclosing turnips and sheep; and the food for mankind . . . is fully doubled . . . the husbandry is incredibly improved in almost every particular.²

The greater productivity of the land was evidenced by increased rentals. At Mongewell these rose from 10s. to 25s. an acre, and near Marsh and Toot Baldon the land fetched 16s. an acre where it had yielded but 7s.6d. before. Moreover, the farmers were "much richer now than they were then" and paid the higher rents with more ease than formerly.³

¹ Arthur Young, *View of the Agriculture of Oxfordshire* (London, 1809), 35.

² *Ibid.*, 269.

³ *Ibid.*, 37.

Specialisation was difficult in the open fields but, with enclosure, land could be put to the use for which it was best suited. Thus in those districts where heavy soils or poor drainage made cultivation unprofitable, there was a tendency to convert arable land to pasture. At Stratton Audley, in the dairying district about Bicester, great tracts were laid down to grass for cattle and, even in the Cotswold country, the township of Burford had not produced so much corn but "infinitely more" mutton and beef since enclosure.⁴ But the movement from arable to pastoral farming was to some extent checked by the high prices then prevailing for corn. Britain was still virtually self-supporting in foodstuffs, for after the American revolution and with the beginning of the conflict with France, a policy of stimulating the home production of corn was initiated in 1791 when a prohibitory duty was imposed on imported wheat. As a result, the arable acreage in Britain reached a high level and in Oxfordshire all suitable land was under the plough. (See Fig. 1).⁵

The most intensive areas of arable cultivation were generally those where open-field parishes predominated (Compare Figs. 1 and 2). Such were the "red lands" southwest of Banbury, the Cotswold downlands above Charlbury and Burford, the Chiltern scarp-foot bench and various stretches of terrace gravels. These were all regions where

⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁵ In 1797 Richard Davis' map in sixteen sheets entitled "A New Map of the County of Oxford from an Actual Survey; on which are delineated: the Course of the Rivers, and Roads and Parks, Gentlemen's Seats, Heaths, Woods, Forests, Commons, etc., etc.," was published by John Cary in the Strand, London. The survey was apparently made in 1793-94, for a small-scale map published also in 1797 refers to an "Actual Survey in Sixteen Sheets made in the Years 1793-94." Constructed on a scale of two inches to the mile, the larger map provides a picture of the land utilization in the county, showing woods, parklands, arable, and grassland and distinguishing the open fields from enclosures by means of a hedge symbol. Critical scrutiny of this map has confirmed its accuracy and the data contained therein have been remapped to produce Figures 1, 2, and 3, of the arable, open-field arable, and grassland respectively.

The 1801 Crop Returns (see "Agriculture in England and Wales in 1801" by H. C. K. Henderson in *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 118, 1952) are unfortunately lacking for Oxfordshire, statistics being available for two only of more than two hundred parishes in the county.

gently undulating or rolling relief made ploughing and drainage easy and helped to preserve the arable in large compact blocks, and where the soils were of average to high potential fertility. Such soils, though liable to suffer from drought in dry seasons, were well adapted to the new "convertible" husbandry of enclosures; why, therefore, did open fields persist so widely in these areas?

To this query there is no simple answer. The contemporary high prices for grain undoubtedly protected some open townships from the need, as yet, to abandon the traditional organisation. In others, partial adoption of the new techniques, i.e., the introduction of improved rotations, was sufficiently rewarding without providing any incentive to further change. But in the majority of cases the arable remained unenclosed because outmoded methods of tillage continued to be employed. Arthur Young claimed that no other county possessed so few implements of husbandry deserving the attention of the public. The heavy swing (wheelless) plough was in use with four to six horses, whereas he considered two horses and a light plough would be enough, while the use of drills and horse-hoes was in its infancy. The Oxfordshire farmers maintained in reply that the light Suffolk iron plough had not been found to answer where it had been tried, deep ploughing being essential, and that "the fashionable scarifiers and scufflers of London have been tried and exploded,"⁶ and moreover, where suitable, both drills and horse-hoes were well known. This assertion is not, however, borne out by Young's report; and it is clear that open fields remained because, without the agricultural implements which formed an essential element of the new husbandry, increased profits from enclosures seemed doubtful.

At the same time it is apparent that some parishes remained open because the advantages of the new husbandry could be obtained without recourse to enclosure. Such was the tiny parish of Easington, three miles northwest of Watlington, in the highly arable Chiltern scarp-foot belt. Two principal landlords owned and occupied the greater part of the farmland (213 out of a total of approximately 230 acres) and, through possession of the majority of common rights, could control the cropping of the open fields and thereby secure the introduction of new and improved methods

at will. Similar conditions obtained in several nearby parishes where the bulk of the land was in the hands of one, two, or, at most, three principal landlords or tenants.

The extent of the open fields accounted in part for the scarcity of timber in Oxfordshire. Originally well-wooded, the county had gradually been despoiled of its rich reserves of timber, especially during the Civil War (1640-48), and the destruction of the woodlands was still continuing. In the 20 years before 1807 many had been "grubbed up, since the interest of the price and the rent of the land in arable, together pay far better than the wood."⁷ Only the Chiltern district remained well-wooded, but even there the beechwoods did not cover so large an area as they do today, and parts now tree-covered were then in cultivation.

The largest continuous area of wood and parkland was the Royal Forest of Wychwood covering some 3,700 acres on the divide between the Windrush and Evenlode valleys. It comprised the Crown lands and various purlieus, private woods and coppices which, though disafforested, continued subject to the "Range and Feed of the Deer" and thus suffered considerably from their depredations.

The Crown lands included 18 coppices totaling 1841 acres. Each year one coppice was enclosed and the underwood, after being valued standing, was auctioned and later cut by the buyers. This led to serious abuse, for

the Purchasers not only cut down all the small Tillers and Standills . . . without leaving the proper Quantity fixed by Law, but also Lop the Timber Trees which may be standing in the Coppices.⁸

There was, moreover, wholesale illegal cutting by the poor "which is done in open Day, and carried away after in Waggon, in the Night, avowedly and without Regard." It is not surprising that the survey of 1792 found only 173 oaks fit for the navy in the whole area.

Over the "Open Ridings, Plains and Waste lands" within the forest, neighbouring villages claimed right of pasture for "Horses and Horned

⁷ *Ibid.*, 221.

⁸ "The Tenth Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the State and Condition of the Woods, Forests, and Land Revenues of the Crown," dated Feb. 1, 1792. *Reports of Crown Lands*, Vol. 1, 1787-92.

Tiller: a sapling; a shoot rising from the stock or stool of a felled tree. *Standill*: a young tree left standing for timber.

⁶ Young, *View of the Agriculture of Oxfordshire*, 75-76.

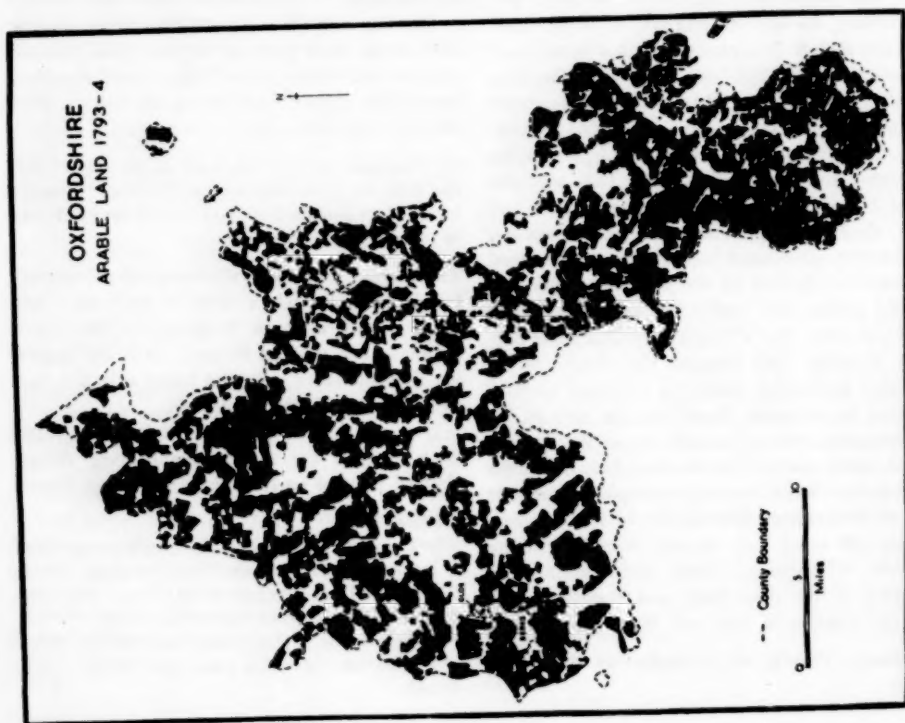


FIG. 1

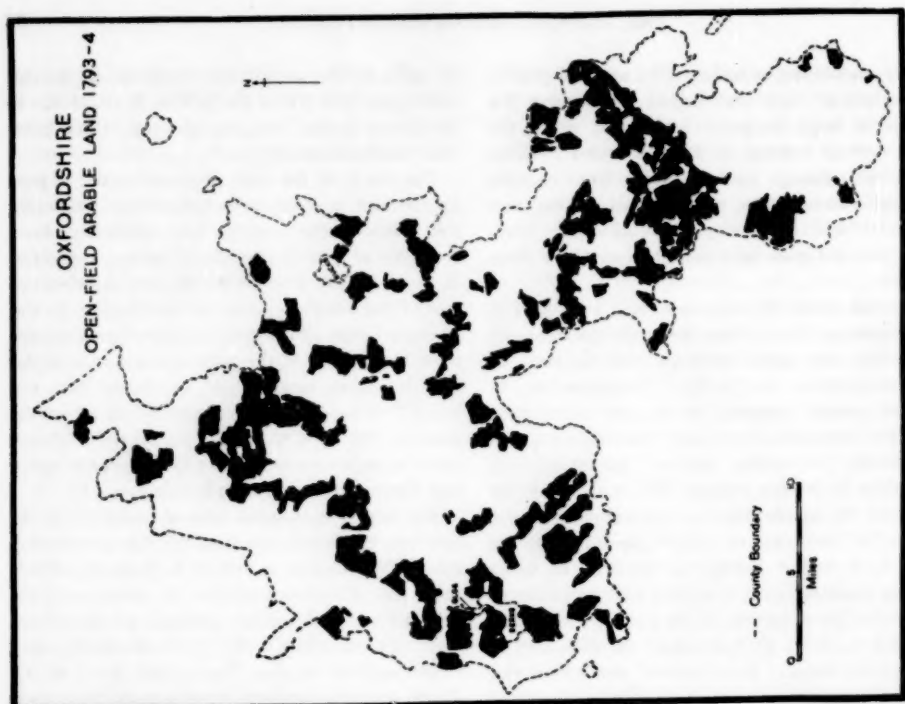


FIG. 2

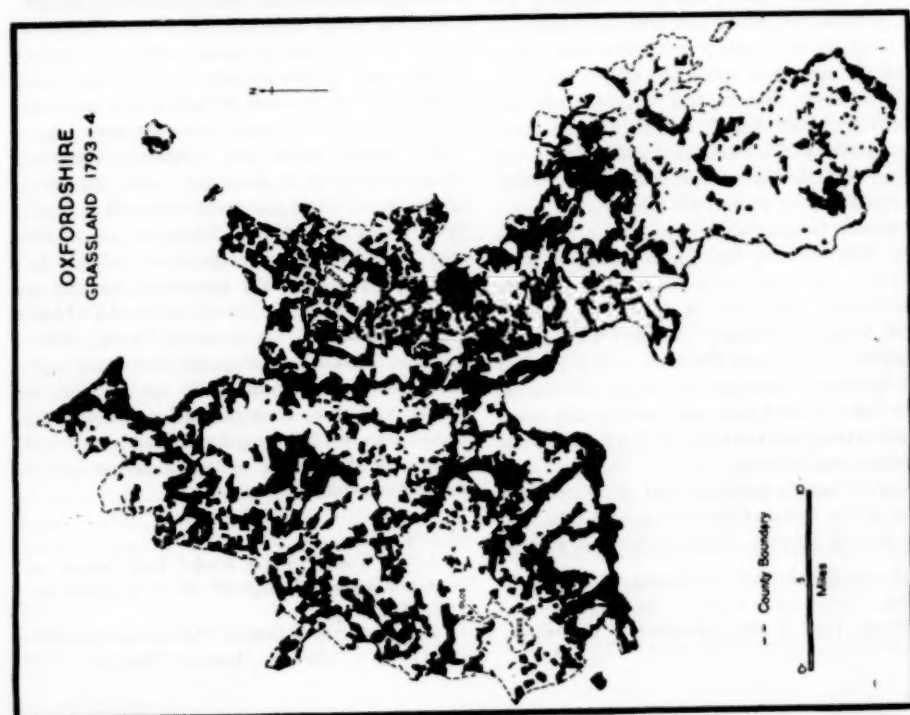


FIG. 3

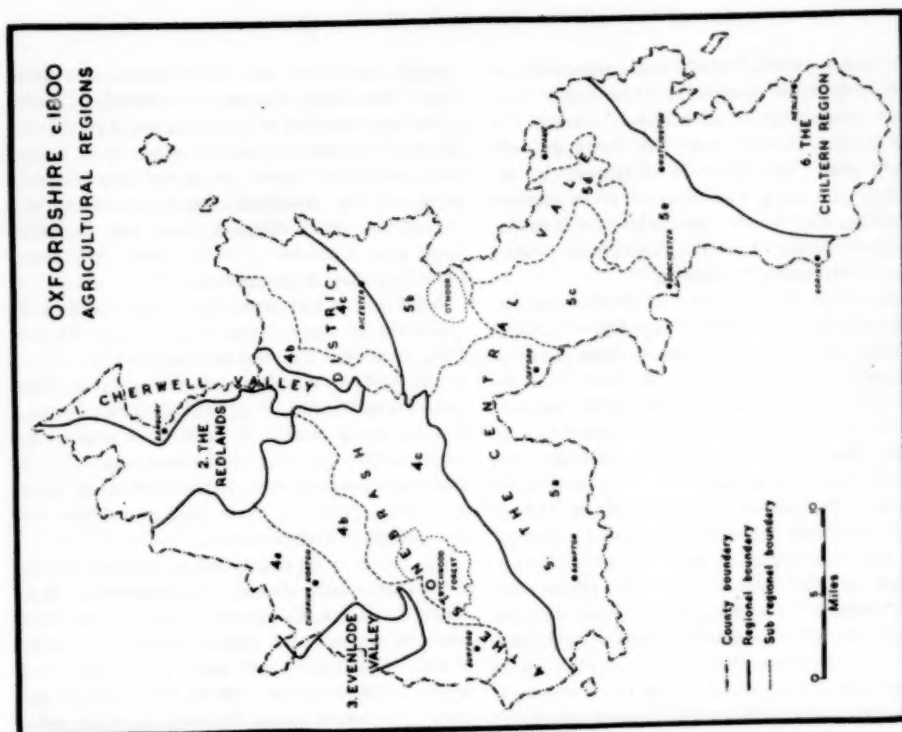


FIG. 4

Cattle (except Oxen)" while some possessed, in addition, rights of sheepwalk. These rights were the occasion of yet other abuses. Although the forest officers averred that "no Swine are admitted" and "the Cattle of Strangers is impounded" the forest was reported to be overrun with swine, and "neither the Swine, nor even the Deer, are kept out of the King's Coppices as they are out of the private Coppices."

Apart from the Chiltern and Wychwood districts, the county was poorly supplied with wood for timber and firing. This was a consequence of the quicker and larger return received from the land in arable, the unsuitability of the exposed uplands for tree growth, and the persistence of the hedgeless open fields. Around Banbury and Bicester wood was so scarce that the inhabitants petitioned Parliament in support of the Oxford Canal Bill which, through the proposed import of coal from the midlands, gave them "a distant prospect of being relieved from their Distress for Want of Fuel."⁹ The deficiency of wood was also being remedied by the gradual spread of enclosures with their hedgerow timber and the planting of shelter belts and groves about the newly dispersed farms while other thickets and coppices sprang up in places whence walling stone and metal for the new roads and fences had been quarried.

Although contemporaries referred to the "very narrow districts where grass prevails,"¹⁰ the total area of meadow, pasture, and rough grazing was far from negligible (Fig. 3), and it is in the varying proportions of arable and grassland that the different agricultural or land-use regions within the county can be recognized (Fig. 4).

Livestock farming characterised the Cherwell valley (Region 1 in Fig. 4), a grassland tract where dairy and beef cattle grazed the rich pastures, though these were in places rendered extremely boggy by leakages from the Oxford canal. A similar region in the Evenlode valley (3) had fewer pastures, since spreads of glacial gravels on the heavy Lower Lias clay gave greater scope for cultivation, and mixed farming with emphasis on grazing was the rule.

Dairying was the prime interest of the livestock farmer in the eastern Oxford clay vale (5b), notably around Bicester. Much butter was sent to

London each week and some cheese was also made. The region was largely enclosed, a result of the concentration on livestock, and a good portion was in arable, but fodder crops—peas, beans and vetches, all suited to heavy soils—figured largely in the rotations. Some open fields remained and at Kidlington there was "a very large cow common... which feeds 300 cows from 16th May to Michaelmas."¹¹

Arable land and open fields were much less important in the dairying districts near Thame (5d), where the rich enclosed pastures were adequate for both dairying and feeding stock. The local "lump" butter, of particularly sweet flavour, found a ready market in London; to which city many calves, fat pigs, ducks and quantities of fruit were annually sent. Large numbers of boars were also reared on waste from the dairies for the making of Oxford brawn.

In the rest of the county milch cows were few. In the "stonebrash" district (4), especially, there being no dairies, the farmers had to "feed their hogs in summer with beans" for lack of dairy waste.¹² Beef cattle were more widely kept and in the arable areas were fed on roots and, on the more progressive farms, fattened on cattle cake. A practice particularly commended was the use of oxen as beasts of labor "as a profit will always attend an ox in case he meets with an accident, which is not so with a horse."¹³ Oxen were normally kept a year or two in harness and then sold to graziers in the Thames valley for fattening.

The county lacked any distinctive breed of cattle. Dual-purpose shorthorns were the most popular type, being good milkers as well as "profitable to fat off" when no longer of use in the dairy. The hardier longhorns, more suitable for beef, were almost equally numerous; the herd at Rollright "from Mr. Bakewell's breed of Dishley" being renowned. A few herds of Devon, Alderney, and Yorkshire poll cattle were also kept. Cattle fed on the waste could not compare in quality with those from the enclosures since the promiscuous herding together of all types and qualities of stock made control of disease and of breeding impossible.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁹ *Journals of the House of Commons*, 32:240, Feb. 27, 1769.

¹⁰ Young, *View of the Agriculture of Oxfordshire*, 283.

¹² Arthur Young, *A Six Weeks' Tour through the Southern Counties of England and Wales* (London, 1768), 98.

¹³ Richard Davis, *A General View of the Agriculture of the County of Oxford, etc.* (London, 1794), 24.

The most extensive waste was Otmoor, 2,560 acres, in the clay vale northeast of Oxford. Uniformly level, the moor was difficult to drain and subject to floods. It lay commonable to the eight adjoining parishes, but being unstinted was seriously overstocked, and Young asserted that a right of common was in consequence worth "a very beggarly amount."¹⁴ Local farmers were able to keep a few scrawny cattle and some skinny sheep on the coarse herbage, but the sheep suffered from the rot and the cattle from a disorder known as the "moor evil." The greatest benefit was secured by the cottagers, many of whom turned out large flocks of geese to which the aquatic growth was well suited. They sometimes cleared as much as 20 pounds a year from the geese alone,¹⁵ a sum which to a cottager was not so "beggarly" as Young maintained.

Large numbers of sheep were kept on the arable farms. The sheep-and-turnips husbandry, eminently suited to the shallow soils of many parts of Oxfordshire, had transformed open downlands into enclosed arable and ley fields, as on the summits west of Chipping Norton (4a). Improved management in the enclosures increased the weight of fleeces from 3-4 lbs. to 8-9 lbs., but mutton had replaced wool as the main object of sheep-farming, while the flocks were almost as highly prized for the beneficial effect of their tread and their dung on light soils. Farms in the north were stocked with New Leicesters or with crosses of these with the big-boned native Cotswold sheep, a hardier but less economical meat-producing animal. In the south a wide variety of breeds and crosses was kept. Here the old Berkshire Nott breed was being rapidly replaced by the quicker maturing South Downs, and the rearing of early lambs for the London market was important.

The management of arable varied with the soil-type and the farming economy, i.e., whether open-field or enclosed. The Norfolk system formed the basis of much of the husbandry, being modified to suit local circumstances. In the "red lands" (2) on the Middle Lias marlstones the normal course in the many open townships was wheat, beans, barley, and a fallow. By 1808, however, these common fields had all disappeared and in

the enclosures the Norfolk rotation had been adapted to the sticky but very fertile soils by the addition of years of beans and of oats. Spring wheat, introduced about 1800 and found only in this region, was occasionally substituted for the barley year.

The characteristic rotation of the adjoining "stonebrash" district (4) included two years seeds, for the shallow soils needed regular resting under a grass or clover ley when the droppings of the grazing animals and the action of bacteria on the legume roots helped to restore the land to good heart. Sub-divisions of this region can be based on the relative extent of open fields or enclosures. The latter predominated where livestock were more important (4a and 4c), while open fields survived mainly in areas less suited to animal husbandry (4b) where rich cornlands gave no incentive for the abandonment of common fields, especially at this period of high grain prices.

Including "all sorts of soils, from loose sand to heavy clay" and with open and enclosed fields closely intermingled, the central vale (5) was an area "to which no particular characteristic can be assigned."¹⁶ Parishes in the upper Thames valley (5a) combined open-field cultivation with the grazing of large herds of cattle on the meadows by the Thames and its tributaries. Fallow, wheat, beans, and barley was the usual course here, while on the sandy limestones of the Oxford heights and adjoining areas (5c) turnips did well and figured in the rotations on both the open and enclosed farms. The most extensive and continuous tract of open-field arable in the county lay in the south of the central vale stretching from Chinnor in the east to Dorchester and Goring on the Thames (5e). Here rotations of all sorts were in use from a simple system of two crops and a fallow at Goldar, Tetsworth and Crowell, to complicated variations of the Norfolk course lasting eight or twelve years at Benson and Dorchester.

The management of arable in the Chiltern region (6) was also very varied. The differences in the superficial deposits on the chalk, the accidented surface and the prevalence of enclosures, meant that farming practices differed from farm to farm and even from field to field. The main distinguishing feature of the district's farming was the large area devoted to sainfoin, a fodder crop for the flocks which fed on the heaths and

¹⁴ Young, *View of the Agriculture of Oxfordshire*, 228.

¹⁵ *Jackson's Oxford Journal* (London), Sept. 11, 1830.

¹⁶ Young, *View of the Agriculture of Oxfordshire*, 8.

the rough grazings of the scarp-face for part of the year.

Although the county's agriculture had improved greatly as a result of enclosure and the introduction of more scientific rotations, much still needed to be done. Of the crops, only sainfoin and swedes apparently merited special mention in Young's report to the Board of Agriculture. The cultivation of the former he found "highly meritorious" while that of swedes was "a distinguished figure to the honour of the agriculture of the county," and the improvement of slicing and feeding them in troughs to penned sheep was commended.¹⁷ Potatoes and cabbages were practically unknown and the average yields of wheat (3-4 quarters an acre), barley (4 qrs.), and oats (5 qrs.) were not remarkable.

Apart from sainfoin and swedes and the "capt stone reek (rick) stands" which he had rarely seen better arranged, Young found little to praise. A well laid out farmyard, he complained, would be looked for in vain; there were no irrigated

meadows though large areas were suitable, and the woodlands, even on the estate of the Duke of Marlborough, showed a great want of thinning. An ardent advocate of the large enclosed farm, Young considered many Oxford farms to be "too small to be consistent with good husbandry,"¹⁸ but a more important factor contributing to the poor farming in some parts of the county was the practice of letting farms on a yearly tenure. Tenants were afraid to undertake improvements lest their rents be raised or they be dispossessed. Nevertheless new ideas were spreading, and the farmers were

In the period of a great change in their ideas, knowledge, practice. . . . Enclosing . . . has changed the men as much as it has improved the county; they are now in the ebullition of this change; a vast amelioration has been wrought and is working", but "a great deal of ignorance and barbarity remains" and "the old open field school must die off before new ideas become generally rooted."¹⁹

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

RECORDS OF THE FIRST CENTURY OF INTEREST OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT IN PLANT INDUSTRIES

HAROLD T. PINKETT

National Archives, Washington, D. C.

Plant industries have played a large part in the economic growth of the United States. They have produced not only crops which have supplied food, shelter, and clothing for a steadily increasing population but also crops that have fed animals that produce other types of food and clothing. Moreover, certain plant industries have furnished many things not strictly required to sustain life but which, nevertheless, add to human health and contentment. It is not surprising, therefore, that government interest in plant industries was manifested early in the history of the United States and has grown steadily with the nation.

Records in the National Archives, Washington, D. C., document the long interest of the United States government in plant industries and constitute important sources for the study of many aspects of the rise and development of these industries. In general, this interest embraced the

desire to ascertain what imported crop plants might be grown in the United States; to search the world for grains, fruits, vegetables, and grasses that might be useful here; to obtain new plant varieties by breeding and selection; to control destructive diseases and insects; to open new markets for plant products; and to improve methods of handling, shipping, and marketing crops.

Efforts to introduce new plant varieties received official support during colonial times. Soon after the establishment of the Federal government naval and consular officers began to send home seeds and cuttings of foreign plants. Such plant introduction work was left to the initiative of individual officials until 1819, when William Crawford, Secretary of the Treasury, requested American consuls to send to collectors of ports useful foreign seeds and plants for home distribution. Crawford signifi-

cantly observed: "The introduction of useful plants, not before cultivated, or of such as are of superior quality to those which have been previously introduced, is an object of great importance to every civilized state, but more particularly to one recently organized, in which progress of improvements of every kind has not to contend with ancient and deep-rooted prejudices."¹ Similarly, Crawford's successor, Richard Rush, stated that President John Quincy Adams desired to have useful foreign trees and plants introduced into the United States. Thus in 1827 Rush requested American consuls to send to customs collectors "forest trees useful for timber; grain of any description; fruit trees; vegetables for the table; esculent roots; and, in short, plants of whatever nature useful as food for man or the domestic animals, or for purposes connected with manufactures or any of the useful arts."²

Foreign seeds and plants sent to the United States by the consuls, naval officers, and other persons often failed to reach farmers who might have cultivated them. But in 1836 Henry L. Ellsworth, Commissioner of Patents, on his own initiative began to distribute these seeds and plants by means of the franking privilege of cooperating congressmen. In 1837 he urged the creation of a central agency to receive and distribute these agricultural contributions. His plea was heeded in 1839 when Congress appropriated \$1,000 for collecting and distributing cuttings and seeds, conducting agricultural investigations, and procuring agricultural statistics.³ An Agricultural Section was established in the Patent Office to handle these new duties. Thus in 1839 the Federal interest and activity in plant industries provided the foundation for the development of the United States Department of Agriculture.

The period from 1839 to 1939 may be regarded as the first century of systematic Federal interest in plant industries. Most of the extant records of the Federal government relating to this interest are among records of the Department of Agriculture in the National Archives. They begin with a small group of records of the Agricultural Section

of the Patent Office, continue with very incomplete series for the Department of Agriculture prior to the 1890's, and end with large, fairly complete documentary collections of the Department for the twentieth century. The most pertinent documents are among records of the former Bureau of Plant Industry which in 1943 was merged with units handling soil and agricultural engineering investigations to form the Bureau of Plant Industry, Soils, and Agricultural Engineering.

The principal documentation of Federal interest in plant industries, therefore, begins with the records of the Agricultural Section of the Patent Office. These records, 1839-60 (21 volumes, 5 feet),⁴ deal largely with the preparation and distribution of the annual reports of the Commissioner of Patents and the collection and distribution of seeds and plants. The records pertaining to seed and plant work include letters and reports from consular and naval officials concerning their seed and plant collecting activities, from farmers and agricultural society officers containing requests for seeds and plants, and from agriculturists and special government agents describing experimental planting methods and results and the characteristics of plant industries in particular localities. Some of the letters contain statements on the value of the Federal government's first efforts to aid plant industries. For example, a letter from William A. Forward, Palatka, Florida, January 4, 1859, states that experimental work by Townend Glover, an agricultural scientist of the Patent Office, saved his orange grove from total destruction by insects. Unfortunately, copies of the letters sent by the Agricultural Section apparently have not been preserved. However, the Section's records are supplemented by a few letters of the Patents and Miscellaneous Division of the Department of the Interior, 1849-62. These relate mainly to the collecting of plants and animals by naval officers and the service in the Agricultural Section of Daniel Lee, a noted agriculturist.

The procurement, propagation, and distribution of new and useful seeds and plants begun by the Patent Office were taken over and expanded by the Department of Agriculture established in 1862. These activities were centered in the Department's Division of Gardens and Grounds and Division of

¹ Circular letter of the Secretary of the Treasury to United States consuls, March 26, 1819, Records of the Customs Bureau, National Archives.

² Circular letter of Secretary Richard Rush to American consuls, September 6, 1827, *ibid.*

³ Fred W. Powell, *The Bureau of Plant Industry* (Baltimore, 1927), 3.

⁴ All measurement figures are approximations of linear shelf space occupied by the records. They are given only for pertinent records that are arranged in separate series.

Seeds created in 1862 and 1868, respectively. As the plant work broadened the following divisions were established: Botany in 1869, Pomology in 1886, Vegetable Physiology and Pathology in 1890, and Agrostology in 1895. Meanwhile the Division of Chemistry, established in 1862, had undertaken certain sugar plant investigations.

The central records of the Department of Agriculture in the National Archives from 1862 to 1889 are very incomplete.⁵ Consequently central records relating to the Department's interest in plant industries are fragmentary. They consist mainly of letterpress volumes (about 3 feet) of copies of letters sent by the commissioners concerning requests for seeds, publications, and information. It is apparent that the seed and plant work of the Department did not have the approval of some individuals for in a letter of July 7, 1879, to E. J. Rees, Sagerville, Mississippi, Commissioner William G. LeDuc complained: "There are scores of Editors who have been accustomed to make this Department the butt of their cheap wit, and who to-day can see no reason why new plants should be tried in this country; no warrant for the expenditure of public money in the introduction of new and valuable varieties of seeds."

The principal extant records of Divisions of the Department of Agriculture relating to plant industries prior to 1901 are those of the Divisions of Seeds, Pomology, Vegetable Physiology and Pathology, and Chemistry. The purchase, testing, and distribution of seeds are dealt with in correspondence, lists, and ledgers of the Division of Seeds. The identification of specimens of fruits sent to the Department by growers, distribution of fruit seeds and plants, and viticultural experimentation by the Department are shown in correspondence and journals of the Division of Pomology. The specimens were usually sent in for naming and for expert opinion as to their probable value for propagation and distribution. The Division's identification work often yielded direct and profitable returns to American fruit growers.

⁵ Some documentation of the Department's activities during these years is provided by the private papers of Commissioners Horace Capron (1867-71) and William G. LeDuc (1877-81) in the custody of the Illinois State Historical Society and the Minnesota Historical Society, respectively. See comment by Theodore R. Schellenberg presented in Guy A. Lee's article "The General Records of the United States Department of Agriculture in the National Archives," *Agricultural History*, 19: 243 (October, 1945).

Its records (50 feet) of distribution and experimental work reveal the origin and history of fruits and nuts introduced by the government's efforts, names of growers who cooperated in experimental cultivation, and the results of their efforts. Correspondence pertaining to the participation of American fruit growers in the Paris Exposition of 1900 and the beginning of the American fruit trade in Europe is also among these early records of pomological investigations.

Some of the earliest investigations by government scientists of diseases of cereal crops, sugar beets, tobacco, fruits, and forest trees are described in correspondence of the Division of Vegetable Physiology and Pathology (45 feet). Scientific details of the investigations are given in letters of these scientists during their work in the field. The value of the investigations to plant industries is occasionally attested to in letters. Foreexample, W. C. Barry, of Rochester, New York, President of the Western New York Horticultural Society wrote:

I wish on behalf of the Fruitgrowers and Nurserymen of this part of the State of New York, to testify to the importance and value of the work which Mr. [David] Fairchild [of the Department of Agriculture] has been engaged in for a year or more—treating nursery stock of various kinds for leaf blight, fungous diseases, etc.⁶

Federal interest in problems and methods of cultivating sugar producing plants and of manufacturing sugar and sirup began during the 1830's. The Agricultural Section of the Patent Office and the Department of Agriculture carried on this interest during the nineteenth century. Extant records of the Division of Chemistry include notes, reports, tabulations, and correspondence concerning the study of sorghum and maize as possible sources of sugar and sirup and investigations of the production of sugar from sugar cane and beets, 1862-1903. These records reveal some aspects of the growth of sugar plant culture in the United States and the evolution of important techniques in the nation's sugar industry.

An era of greater coordination of Federal activities in plant investigations was ushered in with the establishment of the Bureau of Plant Industry in 1901. Brought together in this Bureau were the following related phases of plant work

⁶ W. C. Barry to Department of Agriculture, October 18, 1892.

previously conducted by separate divisions of the Department of Agriculture: vegetable pathological and physiological investigations, botanical experiments, grass and forage plant investigations, pomological investigations, experimental gardens and grounds, the Arlington (Virginia) experimental farm, foreign seed and plant introduction, congressional seed distribution, and investigations in the domestic production of tea. After 1901 the history of the Bureau of Plant Industry was characterized by development, both intensive and extensive, along lines already established and in new fields. Some projects undertaken were more related to general agricultural efficiency than to plant industry and consequently were later transferred to other bureaus. The major efforts of the Bureau of Plant Industry have been directed toward the establishment of new plant industries, introduction of new plants, development of new methods of plant culture or handling, and the conduct of basic research in plant science. Closely associated with these efforts have been activities involving the identification of plant diseases, determination of the causes of these diseases, and the development of methods for their control. Much of the Bureau's achievement has been attributed to able administrators. From 1901 to 1942 the chiefs of the Bureau were Beverly T. Galloway, plant pathologist and explorer (1901-13), William A. Taylor, pomologist (1913-33), Knowles A. Ryerson, horticulturist (1934), Frederick D. Richey, agronomist (1934-38), and Eugene A. Auchter, horticulturist (1938-42).

Most of the permanently valuable records of the Bureau of Plant Industry covering its activities prior to 1940 are in the National Archives. They comprise more than 3,000 linear feet and constitute a basic documentary source for information relating to problems and progress in American plant industries. They consist of the records of the Office of Chief and the following divisions, offices, or other units and their predecessor organizations: Agricultural Technology; Arlington Experimental Farm; Biophysical Laboratory; Cereal Crops and Diseases; Congressional Seed Distribution; Cotton, Rubber, and Other Tropical Plants; Drug and Related Plants; Forage Crops and Diseases; Forest Pathology; Fruit and Vegetable Crops and Diseases; Soil Fertility Investigations; Sugar Plant Investigations; Tobacco and Plant Nutrition Investigations; Vegetable Pathological and

Physiological Investigations, and Western Irrigation Agriculture.

Systematic plant exploration and introduction work, inaugurated by the Department of Agriculture in 1898, became a major activity of the Bureau of Plant Industry during the first decade of its operations. This was the first systematic effort by the government of any nation to sponsor plant explorations to supply to *bona fide* plant experimenters abundant material on which new plant industries could be built.⁷ The principal divisional records (i.e. those of the Division of Plant Exploration and Introduction) relating to this work have not been transferred to the National Archives. However, a considerable quantity of pertinent material can be found in correspondence series of the Office of Chief and in the records of various horticultural and field crop research divisions. This material throws light upon such significant agricultural developments as the introduction and adaptation of durum wheat, Turkistan and Siberian alfalfas, Sixty-Day and Swedish Select oats, Trebi barley, Sudan grass, Acala and Egyptian cotton, date palms, Smyrna figs, Oriental mangoes, Mexican avocados, pistache nuts, and Chinese persimmons. The records reveal the contributions of such government plant explorers as David Fairchild, Niels Hansen, Frank Meyer, Mark Carlton, O. F. Cook, Thomas Kearney, and Palemon H. Dorsett. They also show the cooperation of state agricultural scientists and farmers in experimental cultivation of foreign plant varieties.

The Bureau of Plant Industry introduced many foreign plants, and it also carried on work to improve native crops. This was welcomed by American farmers who realized that plant improvement work, especially in its early experimental states, was primarily a job for agricultural scientists. It involved not only breeding and selecting desirable varieties but also testing them under varying conditions of soil and climate and protecting them from diseases and insects. Moreover, commercial farmers usually could not risk growing crops which might not be profitable. Hence plant improvement experimentation became more and more a task of the Bureau of Plant Industry and state agricultural experiment stations. Records of the Bureau relating to this activity include correspondence and reports of the Chief's Office, Division of Cereal Crops and

⁷ U. S. Department of Agriculture, *Annual Reports*, 1912, p. 118.

Diseases, Division of Tobacco and Plant-Nutrition Investigations, and Division of Vegetable Pathological and Physiological Investigations. Among the subjects dealt with in these records are the development of corn breeding and seed selection methods; Bureau assistance to corn growers; and experiments to develop better methods of tobacco cultivation, particularly by means of crop rotation and fertilization, protection from insects and diseases, and curing, fermenting, and handling of the leaf.

Aid to the fruit industries of the United States constituted another important phase of the early activities of the Bureau of Plant Industry. Efforts were made to develop satisfactory fruit nomenclature; identify, classify, and group fruit varieties; find adaptability of important fruits in commercial fruit districts; and improve methods of fruit marketing, transportation, and storage. The problems and results of this work are amply shown in records of the Division of Fruit and Vegetable Crops and Diseases and predecessor units. Included in this material is correspondence with Luther Burbank and other horticulturists relating to the nomenclature of fruits, and with fruit growers' organizations and railroad companies pertaining to early experiments in the refrigeration of fruits in storage and transportation. In this collection is a letter from Burbank complaining that some introducers of fruits changed the names of fruits first produced by him and made exaggerated claims which he could not countenance.⁸

The fight against plant disease is another example of the interest of the Federal government in plant industries. First expressed systematically by investigations of plant diseases inaugurated by the Division of Vegetable Physiology and Pathology during the 1890's, this interest developed into a major activity of the Bureau of Plant Industry. It is dealt with in great detail in the central and divisional records of the Bureau. Highlights of the Bureau's early investigations of plant pathology were the discovery that plant diseases could be bacterial in origin, that insects could carry plant diseases, and that plants could be bred to resist fungicidal and bacterial diseases; determination of the cause of and the development of methods of combatting destructive wilt diseases of cotton and other plants; advance in the knowledge of the cause and control of a number of potato diseases;

and development of satisfactory fungicides to control diseases of several varieties of fruits and vegetables. These achievements were largely the result of the work of a remarkable group of government phytopathologists which included Erwin F. Smith, Merton B. Waite, William A. Orton, Flora W. Patterson, Haven Metcalf, C. L. Shear, and C. O. Townsend. Beginning in 1915 three extensive campaigns to put into effect results of this research work were carried on by the Bureau of Plant Industry in cooperation with the states. Accounts of these campaigns, aimed at the eradication of citrus canker, control of white-pine blister rust, and eradication of grain-destroying barberry bushes, are found in several series of the Bureau's records.

Meanwhile the Bureau of Entomology was carrying on investigations to protect American plant industries from the menace of destructive insects. This work originated in the office of the Entomologist, established in the Agricultural Section of the Patent Office in 1854, and was continued by the Division of Entomology, created in the Department of Agriculture in 1878 and given bureau status in 1904. Records of these agencies include correspondence, newspaper clippings, and reports relating to boll weevil investigations, 1894-1918 (60 feet); correspondence concerning gipsy and brown-tail moth investigations, 1906-08 (2 feet); notes about insects injurious to cereal and forage crops, 1904-34 (150 feet); and records relating to an investigation of the European corn borer parasites, 1927-32 (4 feet). Records dealing with boll weevil investigations show in detail how this insect threatened American cotton culture at the turn of the century and how successful control measures were eventually developed largely by studies and experiments conducted by Federal entomologists in cooperation with state officials and farmers. They also describe early phases of Federal farm demonstration work with cotton planters from which evolved the well-known Extension Service. Among these records a report of December 20, 1894, made by C. H. Tyler Townsend, a field agent of the Division of Entomology, illustrates the Federal government's early interest in the boll weevil problem. Tyler wrote:

I visited the infested cotton regions of Texas, as well as parts of the infested regions in adjacent Mexican territory; also the border points of Eagle Pass, Laredo and Brownsville, to determine where the insect crossed from Mexico into the United States. During this time

⁸ Burbank to E. R. Lake, Bureau of Plant Industry, May 7, 1910.

I investigated its life-history, particularly its method of hibernation . . . its present spread in Texas; the amount of damage caused by it in Texas in 1894; its history in previous years; the way in which it has been imported from old Mexico, its original home, into the cotton regions of southern Texas; and other points.

Some ventures in plant industry aided by the Federal government have had little or only temporary success, as for example experiments to promote tea culture in the United States. Systematic Federal assistance in these experiments began about 1878 and continued until 1914 when they were abandoned mainly because of prohibitive costs of production as compared with similar costs of imported tea. Correspondence of the Chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry, 1901-1914, describes the cooperation of the Bureau with tea culture experimenters (especially Charles V. Shepherd at Summerville, S. C.), production methods, labor requirements, attitude of importers of foreign tea, and hopes held for the commercial production of tea in the United States. Ledgers of the Bureau's Division of Drug and Related Plants, 1903-1908, show funds spent for tea culture experiments and the names of agents engaged in this work. The government's interest in this activity, for example, is attested to by a letter of November 10, 1902, from B. T. Galloway, Chief of the Bureau, to Shepherd, which mentions the Bureau's desire to publicize the activity by supplying the Daughters of the American Revolution with some of Shepherd's American grown tea for an "American Tea" to be given in Boston Harbor in commemoration of the famous "Tea Party" of 1773.

Since 1900 investigations to aid irrigation and dry-land farmers have been among the major plant research and demonstration activities of the Department of Agriculture. This work, supervised for several years by C. S. Scofield and E. C. Chilcott of the Bureau of Plant Industry, has been concerned with the development of profitable agriculture on the lands placed under irrigation in the western states, the testing of crops suited for growth under irrigation, and the development of proper cultural methods for the growing of crops in semiarid regions, especially in the Great Plains area. Records of the Office of the Bureau Chief and the Division of Western Irrigation Agriculture (84 feet) describe crop experiments on Federal reclamation projects, assistance to farmers through seed distribution for experimental planting and the

dissemination of information, and some of the important agricultural and climatic features of western arid and semiarid regions. Of special interest is correspondence relating to the introduction of Egyptian type cotton into the arid and semiarid regions of the Southwest, 1912-14 (2 feet).

In 1902 direction of congressional seed distribution was placed in the Bureau of Plant Industry. This involved the purchase of seeds from commercial firms; the testing, packing, and labelling of them; and in close cooperation with members and delegates of Congress, the distribution of them among the constituents of the members and delegates. This activity was discontinued after 1923. The basic records are those of the Office of Congressional Seed Distribution which include copies of contracts for the purchase of seeds; statements concerning the types, quantities, costs, purity, and germination of seeds; copies of circulars explaining the use of seeds; and special data relating to the distribution of new and rare seeds (12 feet). There are letters and reports explaining the evolution of congressional seed distribution and the circumstances that led to its discontinuance. For example, on March 2, 1906, James Wilson, Secretary of Agriculture, wrote to Congressman J. A. Tawney:

The purpose of the early legislation for the introduction and distribution of seeds was to introduce into this country seeds of new and improved varieties of new crops in order to increase the horticultural and agricultural products of the United States. . . . The distribution of these seeds has left a very decided impression upon the agriculture of this country. As the demand for the new seeds being introduced by the Department [of Agriculture] increased, such demands very naturally found expression in requests made to Senators and Members of Congress and in the course of time the number of these requests became so great that it was impossible to fill them with strictly new varieties, hence the practice began of sending out larger quantities of packages of vegetable seeds. . . . The organization of the seed trade at that time was not as well perfected as it is today and it was much more difficult then for the people to secure good seeds through the regular channels of trade.

Objections to Congressional seed distribution are suggested by the following statement in a circular letter of March 6, 1906, issued by an organization of seed merchants:

The original law enacted in 1862, authorized the Department of Agriculture to distribute new and valuable seeds and plants only. This authority has been stretched into annually increasing proportions, and has departed entirely from the idea embodied in the law. . . . Only the commonest kind of seeds have been sent out. . . . They have been distributed at random, causing a reckless waste of public money.

Closely related to Federal seed distribution activities were investigations to determine the purity and viability of commercial seeds. These investigations were conducted by the Division of Botany from about 1894 to 1901. They were then taken over by the Bureau of Plant Industry. The Federal Seed Act of 1912 defined the quality of seeds which might be imported and, as amended, provided for the coloring of imported seeds, to show their unadaptability or geographical origin, and the seizure of misbranded seeds passing into interstate commerce. Responsibility for the enforcement of this measure was vested in the Bureau of Plant Industry until 1939 and thereafter in various marketing bureaus of the Department of Agriculture. The records pertaining to this seed work include general correspondence, reports on seed germination and purity, a register of seed collections of the United States Herbarium, correspondence relating to the Association of Official Seed Analysts, and case files dealing with the enforcement of the Federal Seed Act, 1894-1939.

In recent years another phase of Federal interest in plant industries has involved experimentation in and assistance to the production and protection of forest crops on public and private lands. This interest grew out of the inauguration and development of scientific forestry and conservation programs in the United States. The work of the Forest Service under the direction of foresters such as Gifford Pinchot, Henry S. Graves, William B. Greeley, and Robert Y. Stuart contributed greatly to these developments. As early as 1876 Congress authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to appoint an official to study how timber growing might be encouraged and existing forests protected. Later it provided successively for the establishment of the Division of Forestry, Bureau of Forestry, and Forest Service, whose research, extension, and administrative activities have helped to produce and protect timber crops. Records of the Forest Service in the National Archives include correspondence and reports

pertaining to Federal assistance to state and private agencies and individuals in the dissemination of forestry information, examination of timberlands, preparation of forest working plans, tree planting operations, and fire control work, 1888-1944. Other records of the Service deal with tree planting, fire control, and timber cutting operations in national forests, 1905-37.

From about 1914 to 1939 Federal interest in plant industries was characterized by expansion of established investigations and the development of several new lines of work. The introduction of foreign seeds and plants continued. Important introductions included Korean and sericea lespedeza, Victoria oats, Russian wildrye, Pangola grass, and Manehar brome. Several new varieties of insect and disease-resistant fruits and ornamental plants were also introduced. The principal records relating to these plant introductions are still in the custody of the Department of Agriculture. However, some information concerning them is to be found in the National Archives in the correspondence of the Bureau Chief and various horticultural and field crop research divisions. Knowles A. Ryerson, head of the Bureau's foreign plant introduction work, in a typical memorandum of October 7, 1929, describes the introduction of soy beans:

Among the many important crops that have been . . . introduced and have become an integral part of American agriculture the soy bean gives a striking illustration. Previous to 1907 not more than 50,000 acres in the entire country were devoted to this crop. Through the introduction of new varieties by the Department [of Agriculture] and subsequent selections, this acreage has increased to 1,500,000 at the present time. The annual value of the crop is between \$25,000,000 and \$30,000,000. The crop is now grown in half the states of the Union.

Meanwhile significant progress was made in plant improvement investigations. Research in bud variation of citrus fruits showed growers how they might eliminate nonproductive and unprofitable trees and plant new trees propagated from highly productive trees. Extensive Federal-state programs of corn improvement, based upon breeding methods, produced strains of corn superior in yield and quality to any varieties previously grown. The story of these and similar benefits in plant improvement research unfolds in records of the Division of Fruit and Vegetable Crops and Diseases, Division of Cereal Crops and Diseases,

and other crop divisions of the Bureau of Plant Industry. Especially pertinent in this connection are correspondence and reports, 1934 (File No. 43239), among the Chief's correspondence which give the history of plant breeding methods used by the Bureau, including an account of changes in methods, outstanding accomplishments in discovering and utilizing superior breeding stocks, and estimates of profits resulting to the public.

Efforts of the Federal government to control plant diseases have expanded considerably in recent years. The records of the Bureau of Plant Industry clearly show how the Bureau continued and broadened its endeavors to determine the cause of plant diseases, to develop effective fungicides and other control methods, and to breed varieties resistant to diseases. Especially noteworthy in this connection was the initiation of a plant disease survey in 1917, the conducting of intensive investigations of sugar cane and lettuce diseases during the 1920's and the organization of a national potato breeding program in 1929. Meanwhile, beginning in 1912 the Federal government took steps to control plant disease on another front by prohibiting the importation and interstate transportation of insect-infested plants. The enforcement of this prohibition was vested successively in the Federal Horticultural Board, the Plant Quarantine and Control Administration, the Bureau of Plant Quarantine, and the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine. The principal activities of these agencies have been the determination of the need for quarantine regulations, promulgation of quarantine measures, and (in cooperation with the Bureaus of Plant Industry and Customs, Post Office Department, and state agencies) enforcement of quarantine by the inspection, detention, and destruction of infected material and the punishment of violators. Most quarantine measures have dealt with the movement of some particular commodity in or out of a restricted area. Plant quarantine records in the National Archives cover mainly the work of the Federal Horticultural Board from 1912 to 1928. They include correspondence and minutes relating

to all phases of quarantine activity (260 feet), case files pertaining to particular quarantine regulations (6 feet), and permits and related correspondence (200 feet).

The period from 1914 to 1939 witnessed the development of new lines of plant research by government scientists. A new field of investigation of vital interest to farmers was opened when in 1920 scientists of the Bureau of Plant Industry discovered that the length of day controls the flowering and seed production in many plants. In 1921 research was inaugurated to discover sources of crude rubber in the Western Hemisphere and practical methods were devised for commercial bulb production in the United States. Also during the 1920's studies were begun on the relation of storage temperature to apple softening and on the quality of irrigation waters. In 1930 investigations were begun to determine fruits and vegetables suitable for freezing. During the 1930's new studies concerning the relation of soil fertility and moisture to crop yields were undertaken, the value of shelter belt planting was demonstrated, and research on chemical plant growth regulators was begun. The significance of the last mentioned research was summarized as follows in a memorandum of November 22, 1939, of E. C. Auchter, Chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry, to the Secretary of Agriculture:

During July and August of this year an important discovery of value to the apple industry was made. When apple trees are sprayed with a plant hormone, naphthalene-acetic acid, the early dropping of fruit is prevented, the fruits increase in size and amount of color and are not blown off during windstorms. This makes the product worth a great deal more to the grower.

These research activities typify the continuing interest of the United States Government in matters relating to the problems and progress of the nation's plant industries. Their story constitutes another chapter in the history of American crop culture and its economic significance in national development.

BOOK REVIEWS

A Century of Georgia Agriculture, 1850-1950. By WILLARD RANGE. (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1954, xii, 333 p., maps and charts, \$5.00).

This is an adequate and interesting summary of the major problems and developments in Georgia agriculture over the last century. It is organized in three parts: the end of the golden age, 1850-1860, the long depression, 1865-1900, and the revolutionary new century, 1900-1950. Each era is treated as a unit with a somewhat standardized approach to the story of the years concerned. The author begins with an overview of each period, which contains a listing of the significant characteristics and problems of the time. He then marshalls data and narrative information discussing each topic, and ends each section with a thoughtful interpretation of the results. This formula also appears in the organization of most of the chapters.

The study has somewhat the flavor of a textbook and could be used satisfactorily for such a purpose. But the style is clear and flowing, the interpretations reasonable, and the coverage of all phases of agricultural activity nearly complete. Professor Range seemingly has relied entirely on printed sources. These include a variety of monographs, professional journals, the agricultural press, and a host of pamphlets, booklets, and official publications, both state and national. These, he has woven into an intelligent synthesis which makes sense and at some points is even stimulating. The volume seems to have a theme which might be described as "the triumph of Georgia farmers over three devils, viz: excess cotton, inadequate credit, and ignorance." Surely his final chapters which reveal the emergence of diversification, large scale agricultural education and research, adequate credit and marketing, and a general increase in the value and degree of land ownership would seem to substantiate his claim on the final page that "As of 1950, therefore, the Georgia agricultural establishment appeared at last to be reaping the rewards of the experiences and reforms of 100 years, and was standing on the threshold of its greatest era in history."

The section devoted to the years 1850-1860 will seem a bit thin and unsatisfactory to serious students of the Old South. Statistics and averages are not acceptable substitutes for historical descriptions which give the real flavor of the period. The story of the war years (1861-65), especially the account of the devastation of agricultural property by Sherman's hordes, is well done. The only serious weakness in the entire volume seems to appear in the author's failure to provide a full and fresh treatment of the problem of plantation labor in the reconstruction years. The boll weevil scourge turns out to be a hidden blessing for Georgia agriculture, since

the destruction it wrought is portrayed as the blow which finally shook Georgia agriculture to its roots and helped bring on the new day. The author refuses to praise *in toto* the assistance of the New Deal to Georgia agriculture, yet page after page shows that help from the federal government in the 1930's was a vital factor in swinging the balance for the Georgia farmer in his battle for agricultural progress and stability.

Albert V. House, *Harpur College.*

Hail Columbia: The Thirty-Year Struggle for Grand Coulee Dam. By GEORGE SUNDBORG. (New York, Macmillan, 1954, xvii, 467 p., \$5.75).

The Columbia Basin Project is one of the largest projects of the United States Bureau of Reclamation. Situated in central Washington, it includes the 550-foot Grand Coulee Dam with generators capable of producing 1,944,000 kilowatts of electric power, Lake Franklin D. Roosevelt extending 151 miles up the canyon of the Columbia River to the Canadian border, a pumping plant to pump 16,000 cubic feet of water each second into the Grand Coulee Reservoir, and 433 miles of canals to distribute the water to more than a million acres of thirsty land. This book is the story of that project and its dam.

The author is a journalist, now managing editor and co-owner of the Alaskan Juneau *Independent*, who lived and worked in the State of Washington while the great dam was being built. There he met James O'Sullivan, its leading promoter, and learned of his extensive file of letters, reports, maps, and clippings. Sensing a dramatic and significant story, he gained access to them and wrote this account.

The supporters of this project split into two factions: those who favored an all-gravity diversion from the distant Pend Oreille River organized the Columbia Basin Irrigation League with headquarters in Spokane; and those who favored a dam across the Columbia and the installation of pumps to raise the irrigating water to the necessary level formed the Columbia River Development League with an office in Ephrata. That which made the contest bitter and prolonged was the support which the Washington Water Power Company gave to the Spokane group. This public utility opposed the construction of a dam which would become the source of government-produced power. The leaders of the Ephrata faction were William Clapp, a lawyer, Rufus Woods, publisher of the *Wenatchee World*, and James O'Sullivan, the lawyer-contractor, who spearheaded its campaign.

The contest over the place and method of diversion continued until the 308 Report of the Army Engineers

supported the position of the Ephrata faction and President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized the construction of a low dam as a public works project. The Spokane faction then successively opposed a high dam, Congressional appropriations, and the reclamation of land. Time after time O'Sullivan journeyed to Washington to lobby for the project; the need of electric power to wage World War II and the demand for land on which to settle its veterans finally enabled him to triumph over his opponents.

Not the least valuable part of the book is its description of the organization of an irrigation district and its narration of controversies over the allocation of repayment costs.

This is an informative study, a contribution to our irrigation literature as well as to that of the New Deal era. Written by a journalist, it is readable and fascinating. However, to a historian it has limitations. Since the source materials were taken from one man's file, the study is one-sided; it is filled with heroes and villains who, by the way, speak imaginary conversations. Too often the drama hides the basic institutional development of the project and leaves the reader lost in factional conflict. Although the publishers included a map of the Northwest, they omitted a map of the project. The index, on the other hand, is excellent.

Robert G. Dunbar, Montana State College.

Valley of Democracy: The Frontier Versus the Plantation in the Ohio Valley, 1775-1818. By JOHN D. BARNHART. (Indiana University Publications, Social Science Series No. 11. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1954, 338 p., \$3.75).

In the two decades since the death of Frederick Jackson Turner, there has risen quite an intramural argument in the historical profession over the influence of the frontier in American history. While no part of the hypothesis has escaped reappraisal, the principal bone of contention appears to be whether democracy, as Turner wrote, "came out of the American forest" and "gained new strength each time it touched a new frontier." In this controversy, Professor Barnhart takes an unequivocal stand on the side of Turner and in *Valley of Democracy* calmly marshals his evidence to prove that democracy assumed new strength and meaning west of the Appalachians.

Barnhart does not question the European origin of those democratic traits such as the common law and representative government, though he holds that United States history is not merely a continuation of western civilization. Along with these imported germs of democracy also came the ideal of the country gentleman, the practice of privilege, and in the hearts of the immigrants, a sense of injustice and the will to make a better world in the land of opportunity. As soon as the "Old West" had emerged back of the Tidewater, the

New World struggle between aristocracy and little freeholder began over the issues of representation in the colonial assembly, taxes, and government services. When these people moved beyond the mountains in the Revolutionary generation, the conflict continued. Finding that government services were niggardly, costly, and corruptly managed, they first sought to separate from Virginia and North Carolina and attempted to form new states such as Franklin and Watauga. That failing, they pinned their hopes on the territorial government and statehood under the new Republic.

Twelve of the fourteen chapters of this book are devoted to the emigration to Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, and to the struggle between the conservatives and the small farmers in each of these places during the territorial period, in the constitutional conventions, and after the first governments were launched. The presence of the planter or speculator folk, who had acquired so much of the land before Virginia and North Carolina ceded the area to the nation, precluded a complete victory for the democratic forces below the Ohio. However, even though the aristocratic inheritance was strong enough to force a compromise on democracy, nevertheless, democracy was strengthened in this frontier experience. Above the Ohio, where the planter influence was weaker and where land distribution was controlled from the beginning by the national rather than state governments, democracy won a greater victory.

In this final chapter, Barnhart recapitulates his theory of planter-frontiersman struggle and re-establishes the frontier thesis in detail. After briefly reviewing the attacks by several historians, he turns at length to Thomas P. Abernethy's analysis of the frontier in Tennessee, and takes issue with his point of view that the land speculator rather than the small land-holder determined the direction of democratic development. After all, says Barnhart, "Equal representation and white manhood suffrage were not empty concessions. . . ." by the wealthy to the many.

This book is a case study of the Turner thesis as it pertains to democracy on the frontier. It builds up a cumulative case as it traces the struggle for greater democratic control in the five states of the Ohio Valley. It is based on wide acquaintance with both primary and secondary materials, as the ninety pages of footnotes testify. Those who have read widely in frontier history will find much that is familiar in these pages—materials on emigration, territorial governments, and constitutions—but it is a thoughtful book in defense of the Turner thesis on democracy. It should become a standard reference in the bibliography on the origin and development of the American philosophy of government.

Walker D. Wyman, Wisconsin State College, River Falls.

NEWS NOTES AND COMMENTS

EDWARDS MEMORIAL AWARDS COMMITTEE

The President of the Society has announced the appointment of James C. Bonner of the Georgia State College for Women as a member of the Edwards Memorial Awards Committee. He succeeds Bennett C. Wall of the University of Kentucky. Other members of the Committee are William B. Hesseltine of the University of Wisconsin (chairman) and H. H. Goldin of the Federal Communications Commission.

NATIONAL HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS COMMISSION

A report of the National Historical Publications Commission entitled *A National Program for the Publication of Historical Documents* was released late in 1954. The Commission hopes to encourage the publication of papers of outstanding individual Americans and the publication of selected papers in subject fields. Special study has been given the papers of 112 individuals, including the following of particular interest to agricultural historians: Thomas Affleck, Ignatius Donnelly, Asa Gray, Cyrus Hall McCormick, Elwood Mead, Frederick Law Olmsted, Timothy Pickering, Gifford Pinchot, John Wesley Powell, and Edmund Ruffin. In addition, the papers of the following agricultural leaders have been recommended to the Commission for possible inclusion in a publication program: Stephen M. Babcock, Luther Burbank, Edward M. East, Henry L. Ellsworth, Eugene W. Hilgard, Seaman A. Knapp, Daniel Lee, Gerrit S. Miller, Justin S. Morrill, Solon Robinson, John S. Skinner, and John Taylor.

ACTIVITIES OF MEMBERS

Russell H. Anderson, formerly director of the Western Reserve Historical Society, is now at Pensacola Junior College, Pensacola, Florida.

Gladys L. Baker and Wayne D. Rasmussen of the U. S. Agricultural Marketing Service are the compilers of *A Chronology of the Department of Agriculture's Food Policies and Related Programs, January 1952 to December 1953*. Copies may be obtained upon application to the Information Division, U. S. Agricultural Marketing Service, Washington 25, D. C.

Allan G. Bogue of the State University of Iowa is the author of "Farmer Debtors in Pioneer Pebble," *Nebraska History*, June, 1954.

Eric Brunger, formerly at Harpur College, has accepted a position at the College for Teachers at Buffalo, New York.

H. C. M. Case of the University of Illinois has been named Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the International Conference of Agricultural Economists. He will be relieved as head of the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University but will remain as a member of the staff on half-time appointment, the

remainder of the time being spent with the international conference.

E. Merton Coulter of the University of Georgia is the author of "Cudjo Fye's Insurrection," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 38: 213-225 (September, 1954).

James W. Dilley has returned to San Mateo Junior College after a year and a half in Europe, where he carried on research in city planning.

Elmer Ellis of the University of Missouri has agreed to serve as Acting President of the University during the 1954-55 academic year.

Gilbert C. Fite of the University of Oklahoma has been awarded a fellowship by the Fund for the Advancement of Education.

Norman A. Graebner, Iowa State College, has been awarded a grant-in-aid by the Social Science Research Council for a political and economic analysis of the period of the James K. Polk presidency.

Eugene Lerner received the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Chicago in June. Formerly at Elmhurst College, Dr. Lerner is now at the University of Idaho.

James C. Malin of the University of Kansas discusses "Housing Experiments in the Lawrence Community, 1855," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, 21: 95-121 (Summer, 1954). He has also published "Notes on the Writing of General Histories of Kansas," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, 21: 184-223 (Autumn, 1954).

William Preston, Jr., has been appointed instructor in history at Denison University.

Earle D. Ross of Iowa State College discusses "James F. Wilson, Legalistic Free Soiler," *Annals of Iowa*, July, 1954.

John Schlebecker, formerly of the University of Wisconsin Extension, Racine, has been awarded the Ph.D. degree by the University of Wisconsin and has accepted a teaching position at Montana State University.

Mildred Throne of the State Historical Society of Iowa discusses "The Anti-Monopoly Party in Iowa, 1873-1874," *Iowa Journal of History*, 52: 289-326 (October, 1954). Miss Throne edited "Letters from Shiloh," for the July, 1954, issue of the *Iowa Journal of History*.

Fred Floyd, Bethany-Peniel College, Bethany, Oklahoma, and Dwight L. Morrow, Jr., Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, have become life members of the Society.

The Chicago Posse of Westerners visited Col. Wentworth on December 4 and participated in the dedication of his study. Speeches were made by Earl Reed, Jr., Howard Euston, and Don Russell. George Topping brought greetings from the other posses throughout the country.

The University of Minnesota has reissued *The Day of the Cattleman* by Ernest S. Osgood. This well known book has been out of print for 16 years.

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- Linear Programming and Farm Management Analysis.....JAMES N. BOLES
Problems of Order of Economic and Agricultural Policy.....HEINRICH NIEHAUS
The Impact of Urban-Industrial Development on Agriculture
in the Tennessee Valley and the Southeast.....VERNON W. RUTTAN
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The Everett Eugene Edwards Awards in Agricultural History

The Agricultural History Society, in partial recognition of the outstanding services of Everett E. Edwards to the organization and in honor of his memory, has established the Everett Eugene Edwards Memorial Awards to be given to the authors of the two best articles (presidential addresses excluded) which are published in *Agricultural History* each year. One prize of \$50.00 is offered to an author who is in the course of taking a degree and one prize of \$50.00 to an author who is a more advanced scholar.

The Awards are financed from the Edwards Memorial Fund to which all members of the Society and other interested persons are invited to subscribe. However, the amounts necessary to pay the Awards for a period of ten years have been guaranteed by three of Edwards' former co-workers.

All articles to be considered for publication and other communications regarding editorial matters should be addressed to Vernon Carstensen, Editor, Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Wisconsin, Madison 6, Wisconsin. Address inquiries regarding the MEMORIAL FUND, MEMBERSHIP IN THE SOCIETY, and business matters to WAYNE D. RASMUSSEN, Secretary-Treasurer, U. S. Agricultural Marketing Service, Washington 25, D. C.

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